

**SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION AS IT
RELATES TO REFERRAL REDUCTION AMONG STUDENTS OF COLOR IN
AN IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION PROGRAM: PERCEPTIONS OF KEY
STAKEHOLDERS**

A Record of Study

by

ROBERT LEWIS LONG, III

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2012

Major Subject: Educational Administration

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Implementation as it Relates to Referral
Reduction among Students of Color in an In-School Suspension Program: Perceptions of
Key Stakeholders

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Gwendolyn Webb-Johnson
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	Jim Scheurich
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May 2012

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ABSTRACT

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Implementation as it Relates to Referral
Reduction among Students of Color in an In-school Suspension Program: Perceptions of
Key Stakeholders. (May 2012)

Robert Lewis Long, III, B.S.I.S., Stephen F. Austin State University;

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Gwendolyn Webb-Johnson

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine a problem of practice present in an actual school district. The study examined School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Implementation as it relates to the recidivism rates of students of color in the in-school suspension setting. Over the course of one school year, the perceptions of seven middle school teachers, three parents, and two administrators were explored in a suburban middle school in Southeast Texas.

Although In-school suspension programs exist in every American public school to some degree, little research has been done in regards to the academic outcomes associated with those who are frequently placed in this campus based disciplinary alternative educational placement. In many of these “placements” many of the students assigned are not afforded access to instructional materials, supplies, or a certified teacher. Since the enactment of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (2001), the

achievement gap has been discussed and studied. However, few studies have been done to understand how the current practices in in-school suspension contribute to the achievement gap specifically among students of color.

This study examined key stakeholder's perceptions of School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports, and In-school suspension as a vehicle for referral reduction and removal of middle school students from their academic setting. The participants were "key-stakeholder" parents, teachers, and administrators who educate students at Caden Middle School. Findings from this problem of practice indicated that not only was the campus not imploring consistent practices and interventions related to and promoted by the SWPBS system in the in-school suspension setting, many of the staff members teachers and administrators alike did not adhere to the philosophical tenants of the SWPBS within the general classroom setting. The research presented in the record of study, identified gaps in both perceptions and understanding among key stakeholders in regards both in-school suspension and the school-wide positive behavior support systems at Caden Middle School. Results of this from this problem of practice found a severe disconnect in understanding the purpose and rationale of SWPBS among the administrators, teachers, and parents that participated in this study. Furthermore, the variance in the "self-sense making" done by each of the stakeholder groups after campus leadership failed to communicate, support, and sustain district expectations for program implementation with fidelity. Initiatives implemented through the investigation of the questions related to this problem of practice assisted in providing relevant professional development to re-solicit teacher and staff buy-in, prioritization of organization goals,

and engaging teacher leadership to re-implement SWPBS to countermand system practices that were contrary to the district's original expectations.

DEDICATION

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope”... (Jeremiah 29:11).

This body of work is dedicated to my future, and my legacy...my family.

First to my son, Robert Kaden Long, IV, he is the fourth person with this name. He is the motivation for my self-efficacy. Son, you come from a proud family of educators. Remember, education is freedom. Always seek to know the why.

To the memory of my grandparents, Robert L. Long, Sr. & Janie Boykin Long, who cultivated generations of success despite the obstacles of the segregated South;

To my mother, Florida Long-Harris, thank you for your high expectations, and hard-work ethic. It is my hope that I meet your expectations as a son;

To my wife, Kari Mosca Long; thank you for always loving me for the man that I hope to be, and sacrificing so much to help us get there. Your dedication as my wife and to our family is something that I never dreamed possible. Your love is my life.

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“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another”.

(Proverbs 27:17)

What an adventure this doctoral experience has been. There are many supporters to whom I am thankful and appreciative for their guidance and support:

My committee chair, Dr. Gwendolyn Webb-Johnson, my ambassador of “Qwan” has served as a mentor and my personal “Dumbledore,” coaching me and guiding me throughout this process. My first experience with this extraordinary professor of color was one that forced me to re-evaluate and challenge my cultural identity. The knowledge, perspective, and general goodness of Dr. Jim Scheurich instantaneously made me respect and admire him as a man of great intellect. How blessed I am to have received instruction from him. Dr. Virginia Collier is who I call a “trail-blazer”, is awe-inspiring as one of the first female superintendents in the State of Texas. Her knowledge of the superintendency, as well as her effectiveness as a networker, politician, and “access-grantor,” provided me with opportunities that assisted me in “closing the achievement gap”. To Dr. Norvella Carter, where can I begin...I have long admired your work, as well as your commitment to students at both of the universities to which my experience has known of you. Your students, much like your research speaks for itself, I am honored to have experienced your wisdom, guidance, and support.

To the Executive Leadership Program, CoHort-I: I would like you to know that the man I am today is because each and every one of you supported and loved me to the best

of your ability and comfort level. Some, I know better than others, but it was my hope to continue to take advantage of the opportunity to connect with, and develop relationships with each of you, despite the inevitable cliques that form due to social reproduction, and personal ontological issues.

I want you to know that I love and support the following persons: Dr. Cheryl T. Henry, Dr. Jan Nell, Dr. Wanda Baker, Jim Russell, Mindy Peper, Sylinda Howard, Mary Ellen Edge, Karen Rodriguez, Karee Gregg, Patty Mooney and Robin McGlohn, Dwayne Ostrova McGary, and Kim Rhodes Monette. Thank you all for helping me learn and grow as a professional and a person.

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“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”.

(Proverbs 17:17)

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Joshua Bryan Daniels 03': An unlikely brotherhood at first, now you are family. I am honored to count you as an ally. Josh, you have taught me the importance and value of loyalty and "giving your word", and what that looks like when carried to fruition. Your dedication to my family and mutual respect for our friendship warrants this acknowledgement. As I watch you daily, it makes me proud to be an Aggie as your actions exemplify what an Aggie should be. You do the Corp of Cadets proud. All I can say is, "BOOM" bubba.

Miguel Sebastian Perez, III: We led a school from a TEA rating of academically acceptable, to a recognized rating, the first time in the school's history. The district gained national recognition for instructional initiatives to reduce the achievement gap, as we consumed many boxes of "Popeye's" chicken. I am proud to now call you brother. Your life story is a truly the purpose of our great country. You are an inspiration and teach me daily. One of the most important lessons you have taught is the value and importance of never underestimating your self-worth, believing in yourself, and working to make yourself better with every opportunity.

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“Her children rise up and call her blessed”

(Proverbs 31:2)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Scenario-Sentencing to In-School Suspension

DiVonte is an eighth grader at Caden Middle School, who has expended more time receiving consequences for subjective behavior than participating in the technical core of instruction this school as a result of his behavioral infractions, he is often sentenced to ISS. As other administrators and teachers will testify, DiVonte is considered a disruptive element in the classroom. Like many African American male students in America, he is perceived as unmanageable and insolent. He objects to all authority, rejects the notion of following clear instructions, and “acts out” in class on a consistent basis. Subsequently, over the past eight months, DiVonte has served 70% or 123 total days of his instructional school days assigned to in-school suspension (ISS). He is allowed to come to school with his peers, nonetheless, because of his “objectionable” classroom performance; he spends his days in ISS with other peers who have also been discharged from their classrooms. Even though he has not physically been in his appropriate instructional setting for weeks, his yearly attendance record only shows two absences and no unexcused absences.

In the ISS or (DMC) classroom, DiVonte is provided with a folder each day that may or may not contain classroom assignments from his teachers. Although he can do

This Record of Study follows the style of *The Journal of Negro Education*.

class worksheets and math assignments, he is not allowed to partake in class activities, including workshop or laboratory assignments for his science and technology classes.

A full-time aide or (paraprofessional) is assigned to the school's assistant principal's office to act in the role of the educator for the students in the ISS classroom.

The students interestingly enough refer to this adult as "The DMC Lady." The DMC Lady keeps the ISS students quiet, but for the most part, this aide is not qualified to answer fundamental questions the students may have about their assignments. When exams come around, DiVonte and the other students in ISS will take the same tests as their classmates. All students will be held to the same standard, and DiVonte is expected to do just as well as his classmates who were not in ISS. Understandably, the passing rate of students in ISS is much lower than that of their classmates. In the case of Divonte, he failed both the state assessment test in both the areas for Reading and Mathematics. Students who receive ISS discipline are typically perceived as rebellious children who defy authority at a minor level. They are the students who constantly interrupt the teacher, who use inappropriate language in class, and who choose not to follow what teachers call "basic" instructions. To maintain authority in the classroom, teachers duly remove these students from class. But because the students are not as dangerous or destructive as to warrant total removal from school, they are given the lighter sanction of in-school suspension for a day or two. In the case of a one-time offender, this punishment is often all that is required to reprimand a student and correct the misbehavior. But for the other students who display behaviors that are perceived as "rebellious" on a consistent basis, ISS becomes a "typical" part of their school days.

Misbehaving students warrant intervention, but when this sanction is imposed repeatedly and for prolonged periods of time, those students suffer from the same imposed learning handicap as a student who spends a large segment of the school term sick at home. The difference is that in theory, students in ISS are receiving the same education as their classmates. They are expected to perform as well as their classmates, both behaviorally and academically, and are treated as though they have been in class and equitable. But in practice, these students appear to be only receiving a mere shadow of an equal education. They may be the students who need instruction the most. To the extent that students are repeatedly sentenced to ISS without interventions that can model and reinforce appropriate behavior that the school culture will embrace and to the extent that they do not receive substantive and meaningful instruction in their core classes during the “ISS sentence”, their right to a free and appropriate education is impacted. This sentence is too, too long. When a school has granted a fundamental right to a basic education, as many do, and then deprives a student of that right when less restrictive alternatives are available, the school has impermissibly infringed on the rights of that student to not only an appropriate education, but also to a culturally responsive and equitable education.

In chapter one, we will discuss briefly the history of Bring-Together ISD, become familiar with the research site, Caden Middle School, introduce the statement of problem, discuss the overall purpose of this problem of practice, discuss discipline and the right to an education, and zero tolerance practices as it relates to the reduction of repeated placements in the in-school suspension program at Caden Middle School.

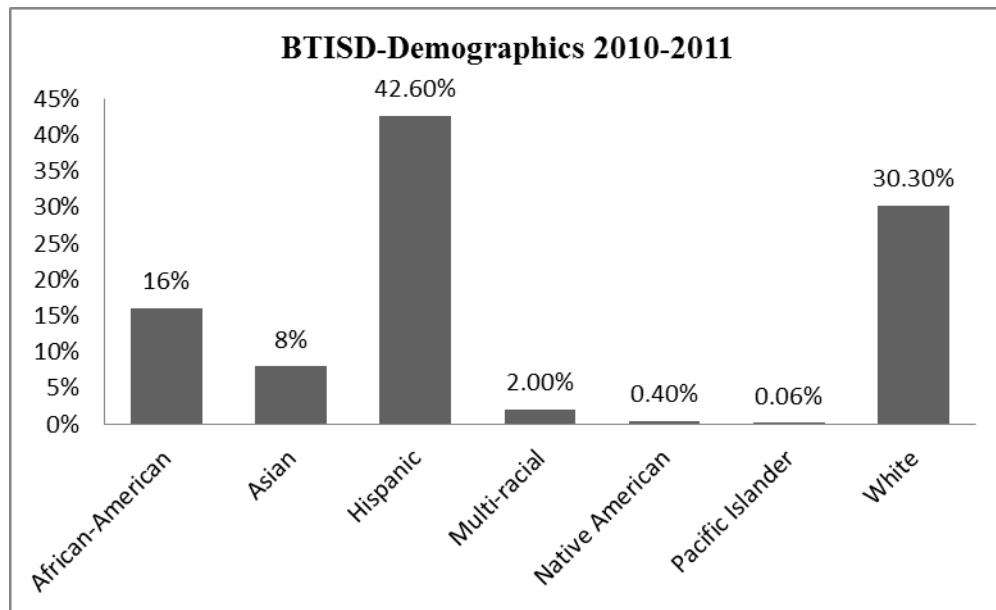


Figure 1. BTISD-Demographics 2010-2011

Context of the Study

Out of the 84 total campuses, fifty-two campuses are school-wide positive behavior campuses (implementing what BTISD calls Positive Behavior Intervention and Support - PBIS), with systems in place to define and establish guiding principles for behavior within the school. These principles guide expected behaviors for all locations within the building, with specific focus on the classroom, common areas (cafeteria, commons, playgrounds, gym, etc.), hallways, and restrooms. Need a brief statement about the history and efficacy of PBIS. The district's mission statement for PBIS is as follows: "To create and maintain an effective learning environment, establishing behavioral supports and a social culture needed for all students in a school to achieve social, emotional, and academic success."

Caden Middle School

Caden Middle School is a secondary school serving students at the sixth, seventh and eighth grade levels. The campus opened in 1978 as a predominately European American campus, which reflected the overall demographics of the Bring-Together Independent School District (BTISD). As demographics began to shift in BTISD, Caden Middle School became one of the first campuses in the district to experience the clientele shift from being a predominately European American campus to a campus that most of the African American and Hispanic students in the district attended.

Today, Caden Middle School is a suburban middle school in a still suburban district with an urban population in regards to student population. According to the student demographic data from BTISD, Caden Middle School services a total of 1,226 students. The campus demographics are as follows: 538 Hispanics, 345 African Americans, 208 European Americans, 135 Asian Americans, and 30 multi-racial students. According to the Texas Education Agency's 2009–2010 Academic Excellence Indicator System School Report Card for Caden Middle School, the student demographics broken down into percentages were as follows: 42.9% Latino or Hispanic, 23% African American, 20.9% European American, 12.7% Asian, and 0.4% Native Americans in the student population (see Figure 2).

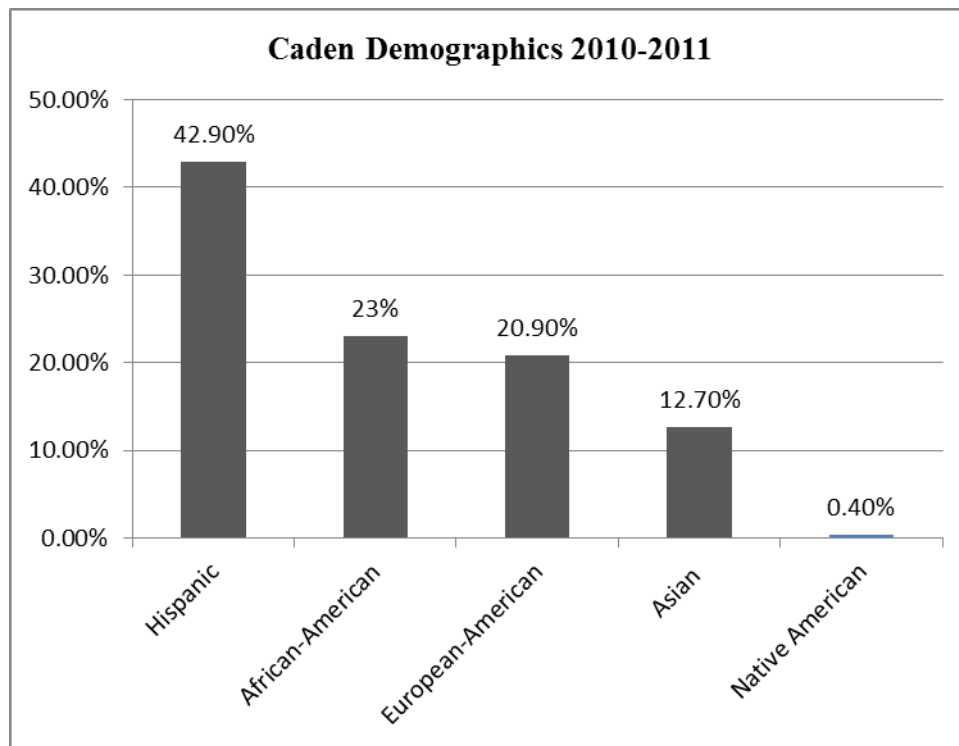


Figure 2. Caden Demographics 2010-2011

The organizational health of the faculty and staff is currently in recovery, from what Martin Chemer (2007) regards as “organizational trauma.” The campus principal since 2006—an African American male who was out of the building due to illness last year, the lack of his leadership and vision caused a disruption in leadership that impacted the organizational goals as well as hindered the continued implementation and benchmarking of the school-wide positive behavioral support (SWPBS) initiative pushed by the district. The campus was placed in charge of a first-year African-American administrator who was serving in her first year as Director of Instruction. It was quickly realized that she was not equipped to carry the behavioral, political, cultural, nor the academic demands of such a diverse campus. The organizational disruption was further

compounded when the district placed a female European American as interim principal. Although experienced, she focused her energies on school-wide discipline management through the means of carrying out consequences that reflected the ideals of zero tolerance need reference policies.

According to conversations with members of the faculty and staff, this interim principal focused on “locking down” the students through “tardy-sweeps”, “automatic suspension”, and mandatory DMC placements without consideration of preventive systems. Another issue that created barriers and obstacles in regard to effective implementation and sustainment of the SWPBS system is that the building was undergoing a massive construction re-model. This campus at twenty-eight years old had not been renovated or updated in sometime, therefore Caden was included in a district bond election to increase building capacity and update classrooms while making the campus aesthetically comparable to other BTISD schools.

In late August of 2010, the BTISD appointed an African American female to the post as principal for the 2010–2011 academic school year. The district charged her with several objectives—one of them being the complete integration of school-wide positive behavior support systems (SWPBS) into the established culture of the school and district’s organizational climate. Shortly, after taking the helm of Caden Middle School, the newest principal had to start her first year as principal delivering sad news to her disconnected staff. The former principal, the African American male, lost his battle with his illness, sending ripples of intensified trauma throughout the organization.

At the conclusion of the 2010-2011 school years, Caden Middle School earned the label as a campus that was “Academically Acceptable” due to both African American and Economically Disadvantaged students scoring below the 2011 state set standard which is 75% passing on the state-wide assessment in all sub-groups. This resulted in the federal government placing another label on Caden Middle School, making it a school that was not in compliance with federal regulations associated with Adequate Yearly Progress or (AYP).

Statement of the Problem

Caden Middle School is a school that is currently experiencing incomplete success as it relates to discipline referrals, specifically in the area of in-school suspensions. Campus data reflects a five year pattern is indicative of an over-representation of students of color, primarily for African American and Hispanic students of color, were placed in this alternative educational disciplinary placement. Furthermore, during the 2010-2011 school year Caden Middle School failed to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) standards in mathematics among the subgroup of African-American students. In correlating the academic data along with discipline data the principal investigator found that some of the same students who were repeatedly placed in the in-school suspension setting were not successful on the state assessment which is what the federal government utilizes to determine AYP. Statewide, the raw data totals from the Texas Education Agency 2009–2010 show middle school students of color being over-represented in ISS placements (TEA, 2010). African American and

Hispanic or Latino students are receiving ISS as a consequence for subjective behavior at a higher rate according to the research (TEA, 2010).

State data from the Texas Education Agency found that students of African-American students represent 14% of the population statewide, and district data indicates its students of color are being placed in an ISS setting twice more than their European American counterparts (see figure 3). ISS Caden Middle School data from 2010–2011 points out that African Americans account for approximately 45% of the in-school suspensions, yet they represent 23% of the total population at Caden Middle School.

Many students who are placed in ISS settings have faced repeated days in ISS settings (Lyons, 2003). We serving as culturally responsive agents see all the problems ISS creates, as well as some positive aspects of the implementation of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) strategies in the ISS setting. However, we do not know what the perceptions of the ISS program are from those involved in the process, and furthermore, we do not understand the perceptions that positive behavioral support interventions will have on the reduction of referrals in regards to students of color in the ISS setting. In the fall of 2011, school leadership was attempting to reduce ISS rates without knowledge of the perceptions of those charged to implement or the perceptions or the necessary knowledge of the interventions' needed.

This study contributes to the aforementioned gap in regards to invention programs in in-school suspension settings and how those interventions are perceived by allowing perceptions of key stakeholders to emerge. This paper gives the school administrators, teachers, and parents some guiding principles in the use for ISS in a

SWPBS system school. Appropriate use of these techniques can enhance the opportunity for disruptive students to exhibit pro-social behaviors and gain a successful school experience. The particular nature of this problem is the denial of access to a free and appropriate education based on often subjective behavior that is followed by repeated exclusion from the general classroom setting.

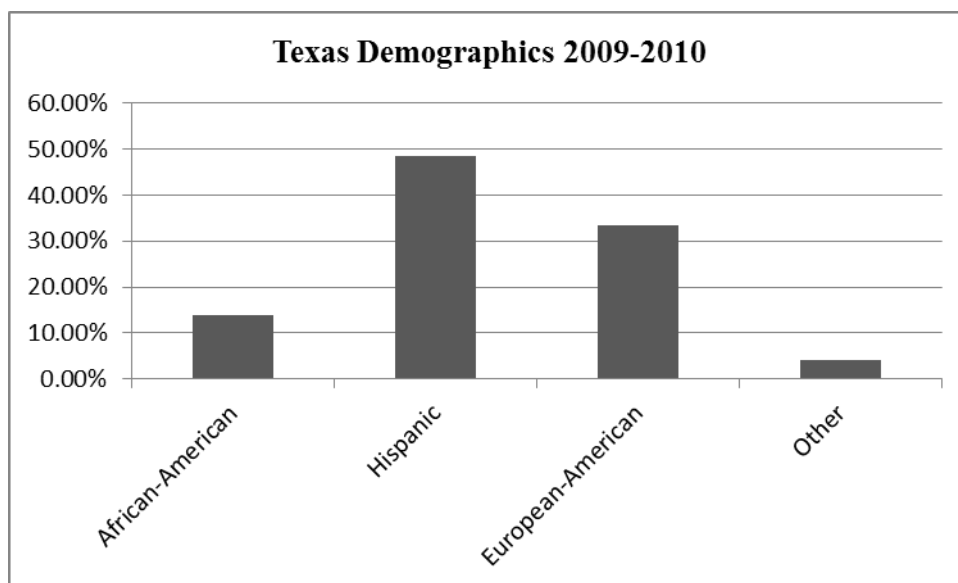


Figure 3. Texas Demographics 2009-2010

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this problem of practice was to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents in regards to the implementation of a school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) system and how it is implemented in-school suspension (ISS) as a reduction method for future ISS placements. Given the history of disproportionate exclusion of particular groups, and the severe negative academic consequences of repeated exclusion from the instructional classroom setting, it was

important to investigate how key stakeholders viewed the ISS process, program, and effectiveness of that program when utilizing SWPBS systems interventions. A goal of interviewing multiple key stakeholders was to gain a systems perspective rather than the perspective of a single stakeholder. Through in-depth interviews, the study investigated the ISS process and its outcomes as perceived by the teachers, administrators, and the parents of the students who had repeatedly served a consequence of an infraction not clear. . Additionally, middle school administrators and teachers who are responsible for identifying, diagnosing, and prescribing the misbehavior were interviewed.

The purpose of this exploratory study was to determine the key stakeholder's perceptions of the ISS process in redirecting a student's behavior, while reducing their recidivism rate through the implementation of the SWPBS. ISS programs that assist in decreasing disruptive behaviors require constructive planning and implementation. A growing body of research offers school administrators some guiding principles in the development of effective ISS programs. Furthermore, the study will conduct this analysis through in-depth interviews to explore possible differences in perceptions between the parents of the students placed in the ISS program because of mis-behavior, and key education personnel involved in decisions that place these students of color in this setting repeatedly.

Data was collected from October 2010 until October 2011 and themes identified and coded to determine if the interventions evidenced in the SWPBS created a culture that reduces the referral rates of students of color. Further, as a problem of practice, the identified themes were embraced to develop suggestions for interventions that would

assist key-stakeholders in Caden Middle School better meeting the behavioral and academic needs of Caden Middle School students placed in ISS. Identifying the gaps in information between these three groups of key stakeholders who were interviewed may help school districts meet the needs of some of their most at-risk students. The purpose of this study was to would unmask stakeholder perceptions that might improve the balance communication and understanding between key stakeholders to better prescribe interventions to support change in student behavior to reflect reduce ISS referral and placement.

Gaining an understanding of the types of academic and behavioral interventions that parents feel are necessary for their children to continue while serving in the ISS setting will allow educators to consider new approaches and procedures that are aligned with the SWPBS philosophy and framework to eliminate practices that promote the achievement gap among students of color. The data collected helped to identify what district officials should provide to students and parents to allow them to make informed choices and to improve the primary key stakeholder understanding of the SWPBS and the ISS program. Finally, this problem of practice will support Caden Middle School's compliance with IDEA's disciplinary provisions while balancing these legal requirements with individual student rights. Alignment with the SWPBS framework ensures that Caden Middle School is fostering an atmosphere for building effective and positive relationships for students and teachers to come to consensus and work together to improve academic rigor and relationships, for all CMS students and especially for African-American Caden Middle School Students.

Significance of the Study

This Problem of Practice is significant. At Caden Middle School, many of the same students who have not been successful on state assessments, have also been students who have served repeated placements in the in-school suspension program at Caden. Furthermore, these students often miss pertinent curriculum and instructional concepts due to their exclusion from the general classroom setting. Few studies have focused on alternative educational discipline placements at the campus level, and their contributions to promoting and sometimes widening the achievement gap (Chambers, 2010).

As humans in this modern day we are aware that perception is reality. Often someone's perception shapes not only our understanding but also our decision-making. Decisions made on a daily basis that involve the placement of students in in-school suspension (ISS) programs are based on stakeholder's perception of that student. This study adds to the literature on ISS by analyzing the perceptions of key stakeholders at a major suburban, demographically diverse middle school. Never has a study researched school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) interventions' impact on referral reduction in a scholarly capacity. The present study extends the study of ISS programs as well as adds to the body of literature in regards to Positive Behavior Support and addressing what Chambers (2010) refers to as the "achievement gap."

While maintaining a safe and secure learning environment is always the challenge in dealing with any discipline, it is important that educators preserve and protect the rights of all students to have access to a free and appropriate education in the

least-restrictive setting. The next section will establish the significance of appropriate discipline and the rights to an education.

Zero Tolerance

To place a perspective on how consequences for students of color can be administered in inequitable and inconsistent levels, it is important to understand the policy as well as the historical impact of zero tolerance policies.

In the fall of 2008, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported a record number of 49.8 million students enrolled in American's public schools. It is very difficult to track the number of students affected by zero tolerance policies because not all schools report these numbers or do so in a uniform fashion. There is no federal tracking system in place or enforcement mechanisms that require the schools to accurately track and report data. During the 2005–2006 school years, the NCES (2006) reports that serious disciplinary action was taken against 830,700 students. Of the disciplinary actions 74% consisted of suspensions for five days or more, 5% included removal of students from school, and 20% included transfers to specialize and alternative schools. Blumenson and Nilson (2003) believed that schools no longer reserve suspensions and expulsions for serious offenses or repeat offenders. Their report states that “the new zero tolerance policy imposes expulsions or suspension for a wide range of other conduct that previously would have been dealt with through after-school detentions, withdrawals of privileges, counseling, mediation and other methods” (Blumenson and Nilson, 2003). After reviewing literature on self-report measures of

misbehavior, McCarthy and Hoge (1987) found that there are no substantial differences between the misbehaviors of black and white students.

Despite this finding, students of color, especially African- Americans, are disproportionately expelled and suspended at higher rates than whites. Data from the U.S. Department of Education (1998) show that although African- American students represent only 17% of national public school enrollment, they constituted 32% of out-of-school suspensions. A 1999 study by the Applied Research Center, which surveyed 12 cities across the United States, found that African -American students, as well as Latino and Native American students, were suspended or expelled in numbers disproportionate to their white peers in every district surveyed. In San Francisco, African American students were suspended or expelled at more than three times their proportion of the general student population (56% compared to 18%). This study also found that African - American children, especially African American males, were disciplined more often and more severely than any other minority group.

Furthermore, a 1999 report from the National Center for Educational Statistics shows that zero tolerance policies were likely to exist in school districts with predominately African American and Latino students. Nationally, those living in poverty are over-represented among expelled students. Data from the National Survey of American Families compiled by the Urban Institute (1997/1999) found that while 11% of the general populations are living in poverty, 25% of expelled students consisted of those living in poverty. A 1997 study (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997) found that students who receive free lunch are at an increased risk for school suspensions.

In-School Suspension

In-school suspension (ISS) is a disciplinary procedure that involves the temporary placement of a student into an alternative setting with limited access to peers and other sources of reinforcement. Students assigned to ISS are typically required to complete academic work provided by the classroom teacher. Socializing with peers is not permitted and, in some cases, students eat lunch and transition independently of others. ISS is part of a general approach to school discipline that continues to rely heavily on the use of exclusionary practices as consequences for student misconduct. It is typically used as the last intervention before out-of school suspension in a continuum of consequences most commonly administered in escalating fashion. Prior to being assigned to ISS, the offending student may have been previously exposed to consequences such as verbal warnings, parent contact, timeout, and previous suspensions.

Several features of ISS make it a favorable intervention when compared with more traditional approaches such as out-of-school suspension and detention. First, ISS affords the school a fine degree of control over the suspended student's day. This degree of control is impossible to achieve when suspending students from school where the student may spend much of his or her day in an unregulated, unsupervised environment.

Second, students assigned to ISS are required to complete work that may prevent the student from falling behind his or her peers academically. Third, ISS does not carry the stigma associated with out-of-school suspension and many schools may not report it as a suspension—a frequently used indicator of school climate. Fourth, ISS may

temporarily restore classroom order as it removes the disruptive student from the classroom for a period of several days. Finally, ISS may be favored by teachers as it may require less response cost to assign a student to ISS, but the result is still the removal of the student from the classroom typically for several days.

In 1997, Congress passed an amended Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA'97) that contained provisions for the discipline of special education students. The amendments prohibit schools from placing any student with a disability in an alternative educational placement for a period of time in excess of ten cumulative school days per year. The act further mandates the use of functional behavior assessments with these students. IDEA '97 legislation has created considerable problems for an education system that relies primarily on exclusionary practices such as ISS to manage student misconduct. Under the IDEA '97 provisions, the assignment of a student with disabilities to ISS for more than 10 days in a given year constitutes a change in educational placement and is considered illegal.

Provided that students are typically assigned to ISS in 1–5 day increments (Costenbader & Markson, 1994; Knopf, 1991; Short, 1988), this considerably limits the use of one of education's most popular discipline procedures.

Unfortunately, this same protection is not provided to students without diagnosed or suspected disabilities—the result of which is reluctance on the part of many administrators to have students evaluated for disabilities, because any such determination may limit their disciplinary choices with the student. Although there are several reasons for its popularity, little attention has been given to the effects ISS has on

the suspended student's behavior. This is, perhaps, best demonstrated by the wide-spread use of ISS for behaviors seemingly maintained by escape from the classroom, such as skipping and truancy (Costenbader & Markson, 1994; Edelman, Beck, & Smith, 1975; Rose, 1988). This suggests ISS is used with little regard for behavioral function, rather than being employed as a prescriptive consequence to punish student misconduct. This is an issue of special significance as the classroom orders temporarily achieved by removing the offending student may be offset by the accidental reinforcement of escape maintained disruptive behavior. Under these circumstances, ISS may serve to reinforce student misconduct rather than punish it. In the absence of an empirical evaluation of its effectiveness, ISS is little more than a blunt instrument that may be creating little meaningful behavior change at the expense of academic achievement and valuable school system resources.

Although ISS is one of the most widely used procedures to respond to student misconduct, little research exists to support its wide-spread use. The majority of published research on ISS contains descriptive accounts of student characteristics or descriptions of existing programs with little analysis or discussion of the effects the procedure has on student behavior. This finding is surprising, given the not-so-recent emphasis on evidence-based practices and functional treatments for student behavior problems.

State Data Regarding In-School Suspension

The Texas public school structure comprises of 1,227 school districts and charters, 8,435, and more than 5 million pupils. Students are mostly Hispanic (49%) and

Caucasian (33%). Over half of the students in Texas are economically disadvantaged and 17% are limited English proficient (TEA, 2010). In Texas, school districts that positively and continually sentence students to in-school suspension (ISS) without significant classroom instruction, infringing on those students' state-guaranteed rights to education. Texas schools assigned the equivalent of about 57% of the overall student population to ISS for discretionary offenses during the 2008–2009 school years (TEA, 2010). Texas schools made 1,745,572 referrals to ISS for a discretionary offense, out of a total enrollment of 4,711,206 students (TEA, 2010). ISS is especially disturbing because, unlike out-of-school suspension, which has a three-day limit per incident, there are no parameters on the number of days or class periods a student can serve in ISS. In addition, ISS programs largely do not encompass of any structured and consistent instructional time. Most ISS programs are run like a study hall, where students come in, sit, receive worksheets and work in isolation and silence, and are not be staffed by a certified teacher.

My examination of the data exposes several other alarming tendencies, including over-representation of African American and special education students, and vast range of overall referrals from district to district, and a disturbing number of referrals of very young children. This is correct for all of the disciplinary referral forms: Disciplinary Alternative Education Placement, ISS, and Out of School Suspension. Moreover, you will find similar themes in discussing the discipline data at the local level in regards to ISS usage.

District Data Regarding In-School Suspension

In Bring-Together ISD (BTISD), data regarding in-school suspension (ISS) programs mirrors both national and state data in regards to over-representation of students of color in both placement and recidivism rates. According to the 2009–2010 PEIMS discipline state data for Bring-Together ISD, out of the 90 mandatory “zero-tolerance” placements, 55,827 of those placements were discretionary. Of those totals, 23,000 of the students were Hispanic or Latino, 19,000 were African American, with only 12,000 of the placements falling under the classification of European American. These numbers are disproportionate with the state total populations. In BTISD the ISS program is referred to as the discipline management classroom (DMC). The structures and design of DMC classrooms across the district are incongruent and not consistent in regards to the implementation of SWPBS systems in the district.

Professional development sessions are held and advertised, but no mandated or formal district evaluation system specifically related to DMC is currently in place in BTISD. In addition, many of the DMC classrooms are managed and maintained by a non-certified or highly-qualified staff member or paraprofessional.

PBIS: Positive Behavior Intervention and Support

To take this case in point, the school-wide positive intervention and support (PBIS) system is an example of evidence-based practice and emphasizes functional treatments or interventions working to build an appropriate and positive relationship with students. More than 9,000 schools coast to coast are trying to curb the zero tolerance problems by applying school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS), an

proof-based, data-informed tactic proven to decrease disciplinary instances, upturn a school's sense of security, increase attendance rates, and support value-added academic outcomes.

Applying SWPBS enhances the school environment and helps keep students and teachers in safe and engaged, and dynamic classrooms. SWPBS is based on the idea that persistent teaching, modeling, distinguishing, and gratifying of positive student behavior will diminish needless discipline and endorse a climate of greater productivity, safety, and learning. SWPBS schools implement a multi-tiered tactic to proactive prevention, utilizing disciplinary data and principles of behavior to inform, and develop school-wide, targeted, and customized interventions and support to advance or recover the school climate.

SWPBS models are being used in school settings as a method of choice for reducing challenging behaviors and promoting pro-social behaviors. The SWPBS approach was originally developed as a substitute to aversive interventions for students exhibiting severe forms of aggression and self-injurious behaviors (Carr, 2007; Carr, 2002). SWPBS is now being used with an extensive variety of students across a variety of contexts. According to the district artifacts and documents, PBIS provides a positive structure wherein adults in the district emphasis on the use of approaches that are courteous toward BTISD students and their community.

The expectation of the application of this evidence-based system is to increase academic performance, increase safety, decrease problem behaviors, while creating a positive school culture. PBIS uses a data-based approach to determine the “why” of

behaviors and uses a team-based approach to determine the best behavioral climate for a school. One purpose of PBIS is to establish a climate in which appropriate behavior is the norm. Each campus or organization is an assembly of beings who behave in an organized manner to achieve a common goal. BTISD's goal is to provide a safe and caring environment whereby its students can learn. With PBIS, it is the hope of BTISD to achieve this goal.

Through a collaborative effort, each campus within the district has designed a framework whereby students are provided with steady and stable behavioral expectations in all school settings. Every staff member is expected interact with students using the same set of guidelines and vocabulary. The expectation is for adults to concentrate their energies and resources on the students making appropriate and wise choices. PBIS uses proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behavior to create a positive, safe, and effective school environment.

It is the belief of BTISD that focusing their attention on creating and sustaining this type of system will also help to improve lifestyle results (health, social, family, work) in their students and educators. PBIS affords the district the opportunity to provide their students with the type of safe and productive environment that enables learning opportunities for all. It provides a foundation for BTISD students to develop characteristics that will enable them to live meaningfully and successfully in society and in the workplace. In BT ISD, SWPBS is called PBIS, which is the school-wide component and framework.

Discipline of Students of Color

According to Webb-Johnson, (2002), “as a nation, the U.S. is doing a poor job of meeting the educational needs of ‘all’ children, especially those children who are poor, of color, and live in urban areas, and demonstrate behavioral challenges.” This statement alone should serve as enough cause for public education organizations to stop and consider the application of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) as a replacement to zero tolerance policies.

Nationally, African American schoolchildren are suspended at closely three times the rate and ousted at 3.5 times the rate of Caucasian students, according to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. Latino students are almost 1.5 times as likely to be suspended, and almost twice as likely to be expelled, as their Caucasian peers. Caucasian students are sent to the principals’ office at a higher rate than students of color for offenses that are more objectively proven: smoking, vandalism, leaving the classroom without permission, and obscene or profane language. In contrast, African -American and Latino students are sent to the principals’ office for discipline at a higher rate than their white peers for disrespect, extreme noise, and loitering behaviors that would give the impression to depend on more on subjective conclusions on the part of educators.

Discipline practices at Caden Middle School, mirror the aforementioned research. Students who are suspended and expelled are at a larger danger of dropping out. The consequences of these harsh disciplinary practices are devastating. Students who are repeatedly suspended, or who are expelled, are likely to fall behind their peers

academically, paving the way to their eventual dropout. The research correlates dropout to suspensions and expulsions. Nationally, studies would indicate that students of color are targeted for disciplinary action in greater numbers than their European American counterparts (Monroe, 2005). Among students of color, African American boys seem to be the most impacted. In fact, according to Carla Monroe in an article titled “Why Are ‘Bad Boys’ Always Black?” (2005), African American boys are two to five times more likely to get suspended than any other group of students. There appears to be a cultural mismatch that creates conditions for students of color to fail based on educators’ perception of these races in society, which may be based on personal experience and media representation. The author believes that there are three conditions that contribute to this disparity.

Methodology

This qualitative problem of practice operates under the philosophical assumption that “consists of a stance towards the nature of reality or ontology,” (Creswell, 2007).

What is the nature of the perceptions of the stakeholders in regards to both the in-school suspension (ISS) program and using strategies from school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) to reduce the placement rate of students of color? As an observer participant researcher I will embrace the idea of multiple realities.

Background information for addressing this problem of practice will be accessed from both the legal as well as political science fields of study. Acting as one of the five approaches to qualitative research and study, the bounded case study approach has been applied across many disciplines (Creswell, 2007). For this particular study we will

develop an in-depth description and analysis, while providing a deeper understanding of not only the ISS program, and SWPBS program at Caden Middle School, and also gain an understanding of the perceptions of those programs when they are implemented in concert. The unit of analysis is the ISS program itself and the perceptions of that program.

Phenomenological Framework

The purpose of my study is to understand the recidivism rate of students of color in an in-school suspension program as it relates to the implementation, and use of positive behavior support systems to reduce that rate among students of color. As this problem of practice will share, the students that are repeatedly placed in this setting are being excluded from pertinent instruction that is a constitutional right. In-depth interviews from the perspective of the Key Stakeholders of the Bring-Together ISD community will determine if there is a common perception or if many perspectives exist that can be grouped into themes for further dialogue and analysis. The goal is to formulate a critique of their dialogue from the framework of critical theory. The qualitative method chosen is phenomenology. According to Webster dictionary (2006), it is defined as a study of phenomena, it is the philosophical examination and explanation of cognizant experience in all its variations without mention to the inquiry of whether what is experienced is quantitatively real. It is safe to say the individual involved will be speaking from his own worldview, experiences and subjective interpretations to the data presented. Creswell (1998) states a phenomenological study defines the connotation of the understandings of individuals that encounter a

phenomenon or concept under study. Digging deeper, phenomenology as a inquiry method needs to be set in a broader context of research and what Kuhn (1970) calls a paradigm shift.

Accordingly, looking at the achievement gap, there have been many shifts in the world since the early 1970's, when researchers began to look at this phenomenon. Political and social dominance of one ethnic group over others has begun to shift towards inclusion; economic supremacy has given way to global meltdowns for peoples around the globe; and political policies of global containment have shifted to more conciliatory policies. The spotlight on immigration policies and looking at the achievement levels of students of color could be interpreted as arising out of this paradigm shift.

Questioning individuals their perspectives on the PBIS and their perceptions of expectations of in-school suspension appeared to be an appropriate method for using phenomenology as a qualitative method. However, there are constraints within using this method. This method can be described as interpretative and poetic if comparing it to the scientific method; however, if working from an emancipator view, the role of the researcher is limited. My job is the gather the information, group it into themes and analyze it. My analysis will be based upon the themes gathered from this process to understand how the achievement gap is perceived and how district policies are prescribed by those with power to make decisions. Using the phenomenology approach, data is collected in two ways: focusing on the participants' experiences or the researcher's experience in the phenomenon as an observant of participants (Patton,

2002). The phenomenological approach to data analysis involves four steps: description, extraction, transformation, and analysis.

The collected data will be analyzed and coded for specific themes. According to Creswell (2007), this study will implement a text analysis approach and the followed phases associated with the five analytic phases mentioned by Creswell (2007). The researcher will organize and analyze the collected data. Stake (1995) advocated four forms of data analysis and interpretation in case study research. These four forms—direct interpretation, patterns, naturalistic generalizations, and description of the case—will assist in interpreting the data and developing the themes for understanding the perceptions of the key stakeholders. Data analysis, transcription, and member-checking will assist in tracing events over time, capturing interviews with key stakeholders, and bringing together the emerging themes derived from the collected data (Pandit, 1996). In text analysis one does not begin with a theme, but rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (Creswell, 2007).

Participants

Purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007) will be used in this case study (Stake, 1995 as cited in Creswell, 2007). Administrators, parents of students who have served more than twice in the in-school suspension (ISS) setting, and the teachers of those students who referred the students to the administrator will be the participants in the study. Although the middle school studied is an actual campus, pseudonyms will be used for the school and district. The district shall be known as Bring-Together ISD and the school as Caden Middle School. The administrators and parents will be referred to by

title and teachers were assigned pseudonyms for research identification purposes. Identifying information and audiotapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the home of the primary investigator.

The perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators of students involved in the ISS program will be analyzed for themes. A qualitative design consisting of in-depth interviews with parents, teachers, administrators will be used to analyze this phenomenon of overrepresentation of students of color and recidivism rates, as well as the impact that implementation of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) systems may have on referral reduction. This qualitative study will examine parents, teachers, and administrators responses to a set of interview questions pertaining to the ISS program at Caden Middle School. Parents of identified students will be purposefully selected as participants for the study. The teachers and administrators involved in the process of issuing the consequence that places students of color in the ISS setting will also be purposefully selected.

Historical Data

Performance Excellence Indicator Measurement System or PEIMS data for the state and district data for the 2006–2011 school years on in-school suspension (ISS) data will be populated to set the stage for the need. Campus administrators will collect discipline data and be asked to share notes from school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) committee meetings throughout the school year. These minutes will allow the researcher to determine the extent of professional development activities regarding the reduction of referrals to ISS.

Interview Process

Participants will be selected based on their involvement in the process of referring and or placing students to the in-school suspension (ISS) program at Caden Middle School. Three administrators, three teachers, and three parents will be asked to voluntarily participate in this problem of practice. Through purposeful sampling interviews took place during the fall semester of 2011 during the months of September, and October. During the interviews, teachers, parents, and administrators were asked about their perceptions (what they think) about the positive behavior support interventions that were put in place in the campus ISS program. In addition, during the interview process, teachers will be asked to record their feelings regarding professional and staff development activities designed to promote and sustain implementation protocols for school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS); how they used what they learned; and how they have been held accountable for implementing strategies presented during professional and staff development sessions. Questions will be developed based on the triangulation of academic and discipline data, collected field notes, and historical data analysis. All interviews will take place in the teacher's classroom, administrator offices, and the conference room for parents who volunteer. Each interview will last approximately 20–30 minutes. All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed.

Data Collection, Analysis and Coding

The data collection for this problem of practice will involve four types of data. Observations will be composed of field notes from the observer as a participant. Interviews will be semi-structured, audiotaped, and then transcribed for text analysis and

triangulation. Finally audiovisual materials will round out the data, in the form of collected e-mails, meeting agendas, or historical artifacts. The key stakeholders involved in the study will be asked to review transcriptions. They will be encouraged to edit and provide feedback. This ongoing series of checks contributed to the study's validity. Despite these measures there might be those participants who, upon reading the final dissertation, might not be in agreement with some findings in the study. Consequently, I will inform all participants who would be willing to discuss the results at any time in the future.

Analysis of all collected data will begin in May and continue throughout the month of June. The coding process will consist of reviewing all historical documents, interviews, interventions, and observational records to develop patterns and themes. Participation by teachers, parents, and administrators is voluntary and they can opt out of participation in the study at any time. At the completion of this process, the results and discussion sections will be written in preparation for the anticipated defense in late December or late January of 2012. All collected data as well as the artifacts that hold such data, such as file folders, journals, portable hard drives, digital tape recorders, and the laptop itself, will be stored nightly in the office of the principal investigators' office located on the campus of Texas A&M University.

Research Questions

The research questions include:

1. How do the primary key stakeholders (i.e. parents, teachers, administrators) experience the in-school suspension (ISS) process and placement of students at Caden Middle School experience the process?
 - a. What are the perceptions of parents?
 - b. What are the perceptions of teachers?
 - c. What are the perceptions of administrators?
2. What are the perceptions of key stakeholders in regards to the school-wide positive behavior support system (SWPBS) as an intervention for (ISS) referral reduction?
3. What are the perceptions of the key stakeholders in regards to academic curricular components necessary to include in an ISS program?
4. Do the perceptions of the (ISS) process and placement of students among different key stakeholders differ and if so, how?

For the purpose of the study the following limitations are noted: A purposeful sample of key stakeholders from one school and one school district in Texas may only produce findings and issues relevant to the individual participants in this study. The interview findings from the study are specific to the school used in the study and, to a degree, to other high schools or school districts with similar pupil demographic characteristics.

Role of the Researcher

The purpose of this section is to explain the both the resistance and challenges in the process and placement of students at Caden Middle School faced by me as principal investigator while acting as an leader at Caden Middle School campus serving in the role of Lead Assistant Principal.

The popular literature is replete with studies that continue to emphasize the negative stereotypes and images of African American men portrayed in the media as well as in the larger society (Cuyjet, 1997; Davis, 1999; DeSousa, 2001; Fleming, 1984; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Green, 1991; Hopkins, 1997; Jones, 2001; Majors & Billson, 1992). Many academic studies on African American men are conceptualized using a deficit model and fail to adequately acknowledge African American men who succeed.

As the principal investigator in this problem of practice, I served as a participant/observer, acting as both a researcher, and as the Lead Assistant Principal who is African-American descent. I was a relatively new addition to campus when this study first began, joining the Caden staff in October of 2010. This fact caused some instant resentment in regards to choice as several teachers within the building had interviewed for the position. Staff members expressed to me in the coming months, very openly and frankly that they did not feel like Dr. Janeway respected the teachers on campus due to her “going outside” the district to hire her brother. This persistent thread of conversations remained a consistent theme as, accusations of nepotism reached district-level ears from “anonymous” Caden Middle School staff members. Staff members

believed that Dr. Janeway had in fact hired one of her family members as a member of the administrative team.

Throughout the duration of this problem of practice, the role of African American administrators became threatening at Caden Middle School. In order to succeed, African American administrators must make extra efforts to adapt and learn the culture of the environment (Rolle, Davies, & Banning, 2000). These extra efforts were noted as I had 12 participants that willingly volunteered to assist in providing me with their perspective in regards to positive behavior supports and reduction referral in our in-school suspension settings.

Among other concerns raised by African American males administrators experiences were unfriendly and unwelcoming campus atmospheres, isolation, estrangement, ostracism, wage inequities, unworkable role beliefs, restricted advancement prospects, feelings of ineffectiveness, tokenism, and the lack of mentoring and sponsorship (Holmes, 2004; Whetsel-Ribeau, 2007). At Caden Middle School the aforementioned research became reality for me as early as the artifact collection phase of this research. Instances of these reactions were evident through “anonymous letters”, the questioning my qualifications, slandering my morals and values, and discrediting my intentions for student success. On all occasions throughout this research I received anonymous notes all ending with a statement that is reminiscent of past warnings issued to civil rights workers. With statements such as: “You don’t belong here”, and to “leave us alone, we don’t need you here”. Attention must be paid to the assumptions of how race and class issues are salient factors that perpetuate the underrepresentation of

African American males in public school administration. All of these factors dictate the types of positions African American administrators hold and the institutions they serve (Holmes, 2004). The realization of this notion, created a precarious maze in which I had to navigate with success in order to complete this record of study. This experience, upon reflection and research is similar to a research perspective provided by Athena D. Mutua.

Operational Definitions

Achievement Gap – The disparity in achievement between African American and European American students.

Accountable Group – The number of students who actually “count” towards a campus” AEIS data set to determine the current year’s academic rating.

AEIS – Academic Excellence Indicator System: measures schools as academically unacceptable, academically acceptable, recognized, and exemplary.

Delinquency—This term covers a large range of poor behaviors that include: using profanities toward a teacher, defying or disrespecting a teacher, not doing homework, habitually coming to class tardy, writing graffiti, cheating on schoolwork and tests, bullying and harassing other students, fighting, stealing, using alcohol, having sex, using and/or distributing drugs, setting fires, committing rape and murder (D. Gottfredson, 2001).

Discipline problem—anytime the teacher must stop teaching and the rights of others to learn are affected by a student’s defiant or disruptive behavior (Levin & Nolan, 2007).

Expulsion—this form of punishment applies to severe rule violations and federal offenses such as the possession of a dangerous weapon. Expelled students are removed

from the normal classroom for up to 365 calendar days. In Oregon, an expelled student still has access to two forms of alternative education: alternative school or a home tutor. Private schooling and home schooling are also options, but the public system does not include them in the options it presents to offenders.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)—Special education and related services that (a) have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; (b) meet the standards of the state education agency; (c) include an appropriate preschool, elementary, or secondary school education in the state involved; and (d) are provided in conformity with the IEP of a student with a disability. FAPE is available to all children ages 3 through 21 with disabilities, including those who have been expelled (Wright & Wright, 2000).

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)—“A systematic process for describing problem behavior, and identifying the environmental factors and surrounding events associated with the problem behavior” (Office of Special Education Programs Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 1999).

Incident: A specific criminal act or offense involving one or more victims and one or more offenders.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)—“The IEP constitutes a written statement of each special education Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA): A systematic process for describing problem behavior, and identifying the environmental factors and surrounding events associated with the problem behavior” (Office of Special Education Programs Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 1999, p. 13).

Exclusionary discipline—this designation applies to any means of discipline that requires offenders to be removed from their regularly scheduled classes. In-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion are all examples of exclusionary discipline.

In-school suspension (ISS)—this punishment is used for minor or first-time disciplinary offenses. It allows students under discipline to continue their studies and prevents them from disrupting the classroom. The parents of the affected student tend to support this form of suspension because their child remains in school.

Minor disciplinary offenses—these offenses lead to in-school suspension or less drastic forms of punishment. They include tardiness, truancy, refusing to do schoolwork, bothering or distracting other students during class, dress code violations, minor profanity, and horseplay or roughhousing.

Out-of-school suspension or home suspension—Offenders punished in this way have usually committed a serious first-time offense or are repeat offenders. They are, in effect, banished from campus for up to 10 days. The parents of students receiving out-of-school suspension tend not to support this punishment because it forces them to take complete responsibility for disciplining their delinquent child.

Problem of Practice – A model allowing a researcher to study a current issue within the workplace and present a plan for improvement based on the results of the research.

Quantum Learning (2008) – “A powerful research-based educational system that orchestrates moves within the core components to achieve desired outcomes. The

Quantum Learning system has been proven to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student performance” (DePorter, Reardon, & Singer-Nourie, p. 1.5).

Sub-populations – specific demographic groups identified through the national and state accountability system (All, African American, Hispanic, White (European American), Asian and Economically Disadvantaged).

Serious disciplinary offenses—such offenses lead to home suspension and possibly expulsion. They include theft, disrespectful behavior toward adults, defiance of authority, harassment, major profanity, aggressive behavior, fighting, possession or use of drugs or alcohol, possession of drug paraphernalia, and chronic misbehavior.

Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)—A federal law mandating that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment with related and supplementary aids and services. The IDEA was amended resulting in several changes to the law, including the addition of a discipline provision for eligible students (Wright & Wright, 2000).

Suburb(an) – a residential area lying immediately outside a larger city or town

TAKS – Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, test given in grades 3-11 to determine student achievement levels at individual campuses, districts and the state

TEA – Texas Education Agency: state organization responsible for the developing the curriculum and assessment standards for Texas.

Manifestation Determination (MD) An analysis of the causal relationship between a student’s disability and the misconduct for which he/she is being disciplined (Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000, p. 242). Such reviews must be conducted when a student served in special

education is being removed from school for over 10 days or due to a drug or weapon charge; or if appeal is made to a hearing officer to remove a child who is a danger or threat to himself or others (Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000).

Weapon- Any instrument or object used with the intent to threaten, injure, or kill.

Zero tolerance policy—a school or district policy that mandates predetermined consequences or punishment for specific offenses.

Significance of the Study

This Problem of Practice is significant. At Caden Middle School, many of the same students who have not been successful on state assessments, have also been students who have served repeated placements in the in-school suspension program at Caden. Furthermore, these students often miss pertinent curriculum and instructional concepts due to their exclusion from the general classroom setting. Few studies have focused on alternative educational discipline placements at the campus level, and their contributions to promoting and sometimes widening the achievement gap (Chambers, 2010).

As humans in this modern day we are aware that perception is reality. Often someone's perception shapes not only our understanding but also our decision-making. Decisions made on a daily basis that involve the placement of students in in-school suspension (ISS) programs are based on stakeholder's perception of that student. This study adds to the literature on ISS by analyzing the perceptions of key stakeholders at a major suburban, demographically diverse middle school. Never has a study researched school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) interventions' impact on referral

reduction in a scholarly capacity. The present student extends the study of ISS programs as well as adds to the body of literature in regards to Positive Behavior Support and addressing what Chambers (2010) refers to as the “receivment gap.”

While maintaining a safe and secure learning environment is always the challenge in dealing with any discipline, it is important that educators preserve and protect the rights of all students to have access to a free and appropriate education in the least-restrictive setting. The next section will establish the significance of appropriate discipline and the rights to an education.

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter I is an introduction the study. It provides a scenario of a hypothetical student of color repeatedly placed in the in-school suspension setting at Bring-Together ISD, and an overview of the methodology including the research questions for the study. Operational terms were also defined in Chapter I.

Chapter II provides a review of the literature regarding the educator perception, in-school suspension, zero tolerance, middle school development, and Response to Intervention or (RtI), for understanding the complexity of this problem of practice. Chapter III provides a description of the methodology used in the study, with brief descriptions of the participants. Chapter IV describes each participant in depth along with a detailed analysis of their responses from archival data, field notes, and interviews throughout the study year. Chapter V concludes the study with implications for future practice, research and systematic implementation.

This chapter has established the need and purpose for this problem of practice; summarize its research questions, its design, its assumptions, and provided definitions of key terms. The next chapter reviews selected literature representing the extent of knowledge regarding ISS, zero tolerance policy impact, and the evolution of SWPBS system.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter contains a review of the literature referenced during the course of this study. The reporting of this record of study used the problem of practice model. A problem of practice is used to define a specific existing educational problem. The problem is analyzed and interpreted based on relevant literature. Additionally, in a problem of practice, data is gathered, verified and the problem is explored within the context of a school or school district (Scheurich, 2009). A qualitative research approach (Schwandt, 2007) was implemented to gain meaning and understanding of the perceptions of key stakeholders being; parents, teachers and administrators and their perceptions of the PBIS program's impact on referral reduction among students of color. This study implemented qualitative case study research as outlined in the study by Treagust, Jacobowitz, Gallagher, and Parker (2001). A case study approach was implemented with the teachers, administrators and parents of students that attended Caden Middle School to gain a better understanding of their perceptions of the implementation of PBIS, and its impact on reducing the recidivism rates among students of color for the 2011-12 academic years. The practices, professional development and implementation strategies were documented to examine levels of referral rates of students placed in the In-school suspension program. The selected review of literature will summarize the research components and theoretical ramifications when investigating the dilemma of students of

color placed repeatedly in in-school suspension programs while being excluded from access to instruction and or instructional materials. The first section of this chapter explores the research literature as it relates to the historical foundation, background and history, as well as educator perceptions and literature relating to perceptions of the principal investigator in this study. The second section provides an overview of literature relating to Special Education, In-school suspension, zero tolerance policies, and the history of in-school suspension programs. The third section of this literature review provides research literature on the history of approaches to addressing behavioral issues in schools, Response to Intervention or (RtI), School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports, and intervention supports related to both SWPBS and ISS.

National Perspective of Disparities in In-School Suspension

To further the discussion, federal law does not require the inclusion of students who are delinquent in public schools receive interventions based on their academic, behavioral and or cultural needs. Many students of color, exhibiting delinquent behaviors in schools are receiving little or no interventions to prevent or build capacity within the students to self-manage. Other federal policies which intend to protect the safety of school staff and students, such as the Gun Free School Act (1994), are based on zero tolerance beliefs and do not allow for special considerations based on student individuality or disabilities.

Throughout the U.S. history, there are two altered policy streams that have been used to address juvenile delinquency and violence in schools. Some policies, such as zero tolerance policies, are based on the premise that children need firm rules and should

be punished for wrongdoings. Other policies and programs, such as those associated with family and juvenile courts are based on the idea that children are not fully formed adults and that they are creatures of the environment in which they live (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). The second perspective has led to IDEA's disciplinary procedures and to the IDEA's basic presumption that students with disabilities should not be excluded from receiving educational services as a result of manifesting behaviors that are associated with their disabilities. Rather, they should be provided with related services that help them to be educated in the least restrictive environment (IDEA, 1999). There have been increasing attempts by school districts and administrators to provide protection against school crime by installing metal detectors, arming hallway security guards, requiring uniforms, and conducting random searches of students and their lockers.

Administrators and teachers face the challenge of implementing discipline procedures that are effective and fair. This literature review chapter on stakeholder's perceptions of the SWPBS interventions and the success of those interventions in regards to reducing the recidivism rates for students of color. A basis for understanding of what and why a school would need a program such as the in-school suspension program will be provided.

In-school suspension or (ISS) programs are a necessary disciplinary tool. While schools need to develop better strategies for responding to the underlying causes for behavior problems, educators must be able to remove chronically disruptive or violent children from the current school setting in order to assure safety and meet the needs of

the other students. If, however, the placements of the student into the ISS setting are to be effective disciplinary devices, they must be imposed fairly, consistently and, as a consequence for clearly defined misconduct (Gallegos, 1998). Several studies have also investigated the role of gender as a significant variable in placements. Palley (2002) reported findings from a national dataset from the Safe School Study reporting an increase in expulsion and in-school suspension for male students. A study of secondary school students in a school in Georgia found that male students were more likely to be placed in the in-school suspension than female students (Morgan, 1991). In a study of one school in Kentucky, Fasko (1995) found that male students were disproportionately expelled. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2003) shows 74,852 males were expelled from school throughout the United States while only 22,325 female students were expelled. The study further illustrates these findings by stating that roughly 9% of all males commit expellable infractions compared to 3% of all females (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003). Consistently, males appear to be expelled more often than females. Many studies that report males as being disproportionately expelled also report an increase in expulsions for male students with disabilities.

The aforementioned studies use quantitative methods to describe the type of students who have been expelled but fail to address the perceptions held by those who have been expelled. The studies do not ask the key stakeholders to describe their experience with the in-school suspension process, they simply state who has been placed in an alternative educational placement.

The current study aims to collect, analyze, and gain an understanding of the perceptions of the key decision makers in regards to who, is placed in an in-school suspension setting, how often, and if the behavior has changed as a result of SWPBS strategies being implemented into the structure of the in-school suspension classroom. For some students, their poor academic performance begins a process of rejection, withdrawal from school, and delinquent acts in society. This chain of events is also seen in students with undiagnosed learning problems. Frustrated and embarrassed by their low grades, those students become disruptive in the classroom and, subsequently, are treated as behavior problems by teachers. Eventually, the student is consistently placed in the in-school suspension setting, is suspended, and expelled, or drops out of school, and the movement toward delinquency proceeds (Bernstein & Rulo, 1976).

There are a few qualitative studies that interview students and parents of students who have been placed in alternative educational settings, but these studies do not include interviews of administrators, teachers, and parents, and all of these stakeholders are involved in these placements.

Mutua's Black Masculinity

In chapter one, the principal investigator discussed in the section called "role of the researcher", several experiences and events that impacted both his leadership and the validity of this research. In attempting to understanding the social and political context of the participant/observer's limitations and or obstacles it is important to understand the research of Athena D. Mutua.

According to Mutua (2006), masculinity is symbolized by so-called male character traits such as strong, active, aggressive, reasoned, dominant, competitive, and in control. However, men hear a plethora of messages about what it means to be a man, especially those linked to masculinity and seen as problematic to them. Men hear injunctions to suppress their emotions, as well as to perform in traditional roles that often limit and isolate them from their own consciences and feelings. This is especially problematic for Black men (Mutua, 2006). Mutua (2006) argued that Black men have been culturally stigmatized because of increased scrutiny, which “subjects them to the micro aggressions of clutched purses and profiling that psychologically injure and constrain them, and dismisses and lowers expectations of their humanity” Mutua (2006).

This was experienced by the principal investigator as he was told that he “intimidated, and often scared staff members to the point that they often complained that he was unapproachable”. To change this, Mutua (2006), suggests that privileges progressive Black masculinities, in which men take an active role against systems of social domination that involves racism, sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, class, economic exploitation, imperialism, and various other systems of oppression affecting Black masculinity’s human potential in the social order. Progressive black masculinities promote the social, cultural, economic, and political framework for all of humanity (Mutua, 2006). Neal (2006) also proposed new understandings and articulations of Black masculinity as a commitment to diversity in the communities; support for women and feminist views; faith in love; and the art of listening as a way to strengthen Black men in new ways. This is due, in part, based on the images associated with Black masculinity

and an attempt to challenge internalized stereotypes based on racist depictions of Black men. This groundwork in developing the New Black Man resonated with progressive Black masculinity (Neal, 2006). Progressive Black masculinities value, validate and empower Black humanity by standing against the dominant social order so that the global family of diversity and multicultural humanity is affirmed (Mutua, 2006).

Educator Perceptions

This review of the literature will highlight and discuss past research on perceptions of student behavior from the fields of education, school psychology, school violence, media studies, and other fields. The purpose of this section is to provide a survey of past relevant research that has shaped the current study and whose findings may suggest possible future directions of inquiry. Sources of influence discussed include variables, such as teacher self-efficacy, tolerance for misbehavior, teacher and student ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, teacher stress and burnout levels. Student-intrinsic factors have also been shown to contribute to staff perceptions of behavior in the school and classroom.

To the degree that the research provided suggests that teacher perceptions are largely determined by stable, internal factors, interventions of any kind will be limited in their ability to change perceptions (Weiner, 1983). However, studies supporting the malleability of teacher perceptions will conversely provide support for the view that perceptions could be changed with the presentation of objective information.

Background and History Related to Educator Perceptions

Research on teacher perceptions appears in threads throughout educational research in the United States beginning as early as the 1920s, with peaks in the 1950s and 1980s. The emergence of research in attribution theory in the 1970s and 1980s (Brophy & Good, 1974; Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1981; Weiner, 1979) added to the literature on teacher perceptions by examining the role of teacher perceptions on causal attributions of student behavior and achievement. As a primary focus of research, however, teacher perceptions have not necessarily been given their due. The past fifty years have seen large gaps in the literature, although the last four or five years have seen a small resurgence in research on teacher perceptions inside the United States (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008; Edll, Jones, & Estell, 2008; Pittinsky & Carolan, 2008; Landrum, Cook, Tankersley, & Fitzgerald, 2007;) and elsewhere in the world (Bibou-Nakou, Kiosseoglou, & Stogiannidou, 2000; Evers, Tomic, & Brouwers, 2004; Ho, 2004; Lawrence & Green, 2005; Liljequist & Renk, 2007; Mavropoulou & Padelidu, 2002; Poulou & Norwich, 2002; Romi, 2004).

Some of the earliest research on teacher perceptions in education began with an in-depth descriptive study by E.K. Wickman in 1928. A precursor to the 1950s emergence of the study of teacher perceptions, Wickman's work examined teacher attitudes toward student behavior, paving the way for the future development of rating scales. Among researchers interested in studying student behavior in the classroom, Wickman's study is considered the first systematic study of teacher biases (Friedman, 1994; Borg, 1998).

In the 1950s, Gronlund introduced the possibility of a link between teaching effectiveness and perceptive accuracy in classroom teachers (1955, 1956), yet Gronlund's name is mostly associated with the field of instructional assessment, not teacher perceptions. Subsequent research contrasted teacher perceptions with those of the general public, and suggested teachers were more apt to recognize and identify symptoms of mental illness than the average person (Bentz, Edgerton, & Miller, 1969). Later research on teacher perception and management of problem behavior in the classroom addressed correlates of intrinsic teacher factors and student classroom placement (Smart, Wilton, & Keeling, 1980) and the lasting effect of student misbehavior on teacher perceptions (Lewin, Nelson, & Tollefson, 1983). Beginning in the mid-1980s and continuing into the 1990s, the research team of Safran and Safran appear to have made the most repeated investigations into teacher perceptions of student behavior within the field of special education. Their work introduced and highlighted multiple dimensions of teacher perceptions of misbehavior, most notably severity, manageability, tolerance and contagion (Safran & Safran, 1987).

In the field of special education, their work on teacher perceptions complements the work of researchers in the field of attribution theory, such as Weiner (1979) and Brophy, with Good (in 1974) and Rohrkemper (in 1981). During the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s and 1990s, discussions on the causal variables driving teacher motivations and perceptions abounded in the literature on attribution theory. The central question behind many attritional investigations is often, "What's driving the subject's explanation for what is happening?" with regard to any array of judgments a subject may

be making (Weiner, 1979). In the arena of education, subjects have most often been teachers, and what are examined are teachers' causal attributions for student behavior or achievement in the classroom. Therefore, research in the field of attribution theory is often tied to themes of motivation for student misbehavior. Only those studies that primarily deal with perception and its mediating factors are included in later sections of this literature review.

Beginning in the late 1990s and into the early 2000s, a renewed interest in the field of teacher perceptions appeared in the international research community. Researchers from such varied locales as Germany (Langfeldt, 1992), Malta (Borg, 1998; Borg & Falzon, 1990), Greece (Poulou & Norwich, 2002; Bibou-Nakou, Kiosseoglou, & Stogiannidou, 2000), the Netherlands (Evers, Tomic, & Brouwers, 2004), Israel (Friedman, 1995; Romi, 2004), Norway (Stephens, Kyriacou, & Tonnessen, 2005), and the United Kingdom (Lawrence & Green, 2005) have published recently on the topic of teacher perceptions. Two articles in this time period were written by North American researchers (Liljequist & Renk, 2007; Pittinsky & Carolan, 2008) and were published in international journals, suggesting that perhaps a wider appeal for this research focus is happening outside the United States.

Although the initial beginnings of teacher perception literature started in the 1920s with Wickman (1929), the research literature flourished with the advent of attribution theory (Brophy & Good, 1974) and was extended to include both general and special educators (Safran, 1986; Safran & Safran, 1987), broadening the scope of its application. By the 1990s, international scholars were applying research from attribution

theory to teacher perception studies in a multitude of geographic settings. The results of these studies, from Wickman to the present day, can be categorized in terms of the dominant factors implicated in teacher and staff perceptions of student behavior.

Influential Factors

There is a broad range of factors studied in research related to the subject of teacher perceptions of student behavior. This suggests that many factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic, may contribute to the way adults working in schools perceive and manage student behavior. These factors include teacher-intrinsic factors, (such as teaching effectiveness, self-efficacy, stress levels, and experience as well as teacher ethnicity and/or gender), student-intrinsic factors (student gender, SES, ethnicity) and school- and classroom-based factors (type of school, school climate, safety, environmental organization, and exposure to student misbehavior itself). A large portion of the literature has tied teacher perceptions to another dependent measure—teacher self-efficacy (Liljequist & Renk, 2007; Battalio & Morin, 2004; Evers, Tomic, & Brouwers, 2004; Poulou & Norwich, 2002; Hughes, Barker, Kemenoff, & Hart, 1993; Safran, Safran, & Barcikowski, 1990; Smart, Wilton, & Keeling, 1980; Gronlund, 1955).

A few studies have compared teacher perceptions across teachers from two different cultures and nationalities (Langfeldt, 1992; Stephens, Kyriacou & Tonnessen, 2005; Ho, 2004) and early research in the U.S. points to differences in perception mediated by location (Minnesota v. Ohio; Wickman, 1928). Several studies of the impact of teacher gender on ratings of student behavior severity have also been conducted outside the United States (Stephens, Kyriacou, & Tonnessen, 2005; Borg,

1998; Borg & Falzon, 1990), but without removing culture as an influence, it may be difficult to know for certain how those ratings would differ by teacher gender within the United States. Secondary dimensions of those studies (above) and of others are concerned with teacher perceptions as they drive teacher behavior on matters of student placement (Smart, Wilton, & Keeling, 1980), attributions of control (Bibou-Nakou, Kiosseoglou, & Stogiannidou, 2000; Lewin, Nelson, & Tollefson, 1983; Lovejoy, 1996; Safran & Safran, 1987) and judgments of classroom context (Lawrence & Green, 2005; Safran & Safran, 1985). Student identity factors influencing teacher perceptions of academic and social competence may include student socioeconomic status or gender (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008), or student ethnicity (Edll, Jones, & Estell, 2008) and/or disability status (Smart, Wilton, & Keeling, 1980).

Special Education and In-School Suspension

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 spell out the methods by which schools are allowed to discipline students with disabilities. The law indicates that schools can suspend a student or move a student to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for up to 10 days (Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000). Any exclusion longer than that is considered a change in placement, which requires IDEA change in placement procedures or a court injunction (Ahearn, 1994).

There are exceptions to the so-called “10-day rule.” If a student with disabilities brings weapons or drugs to school, the school may move the student to an interim educational setting for up to 45 days (Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000). In addition, a school may request that a hearing officer move a special education student to an interim site for

up to 45 days, if “...maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others” (IDEA 20 U.S.C. § 1415(k)). In November of 2004, another exception to the “10-day rule” was added when Congress reauthorized IDEA. Beginning in July of 2005, schools will be able to automatically move a child for up to 45 days, regardless of whether the conduct is related to the child’s disability, if the infraction involves weapons, drugs, or if the child has “...inflicted serious bodily injury” upon another person (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004). There are other disciplinary changes under the new law and doubtless there will be ambiguities to be ironed out during the initial stages of implementation (Arundel, 2005).

Although the reauthorized IDEA officially went into effect in July 2005 the Department of Education issued final regulations for assistance to states for the education of children with disabilities and preschool grants for children with disabilities on August 14, 2006; its final rule (Federal Register, August 2006). Although these regulations are now available, implementation decisions in the short term need to be cautious and prudent administrators will likely follow both the new regulations and the previous (and probably more conservative) precedents where these apply. Ultimately new case decisions will add guidance for specific administrative actions, but this will take considerable time.

Currently, during short-term suspensions, schools are not required to provide educational services, but once a child has reached 10 cumulative suspension days in a year, the school must provide services for any subsequent suspension days (Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000). Schools may repeatedly suspend a child for periods of 10 days or less,

even if the cumulative days are more than 10 in a school year, as long as educational services are provided after the 10th cumulative day (Shaul, 2003). However a pattern of repeated short-term suspensions has questionable legal support. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has said that determination must be made on a case-by-case basis (Golden, 1993) and in 1998 OCR declared that a series of short-term suspensions that create a significant pattern of exclusion might be considered an illegal long-term suspension. If a school removes a special education student from current placement for more than 10 days (unless it involves weapons, drugs or “serious bodily injury”) the IEP team must do a manifestation determination, an inquiry into whether a student’s misbehavior is caused by, or related to, the student’s disability. If the IEP team determines the misbehavior is related to the disability, then the child may not be suspended for more than 10 days or expelled, without permission from the child’s parents (Yell, 1998). If the IEP team determines there is no connection between the misbehavior and the disability, then the student is subject to the same punishment as a regular education student, including long-term suspensions and expulsions. However, the school must still provide educational services to the special education student to allow the child to make progress toward his or her IEP goals (Shaul, 2003).

The courts have not provided extensive guidance to help IEP teams determine if there is a connection between the disability and the behavior. On the one hand, the courts have ruled that a disability must significantly affect a child’s behavior, but on the other hand, courts have also ruled that children with cognitive or even physical disabilities may sometimes act inappropriately because of occasional stress they might feel due to

their disability (Golden, 1993). As a result, parents tend to argue that all of a child's behavior is tied to his or her disability while school systems tend to argue that there is no relationship whatsoever. Within such an adversarial situation, the spirit of compromise is often lost (Dorn & Fuchs, 2004).

Double Standard

In the IDEA Amendments of 1997, Hartwig and Ruesch (2000) suggested that Congress was expressing concern about maintaining safety and order in public schools and those lawmakers were attempting to protect the rights of students with disabilities, while simultaneously trying to avoid imposing excessively burdensome disciplinary requirements on schools. The differential procedures for disciplining students with and without disabilities "...led to the perception of a double standard for student discipline and gave rise to concerns about the fairness of school discipline policies for students with disabilities" (Shaul, 2001). The dual disciplinary courses may have unintended and unfortunate consequence. For example, Ahearn (1994) believes some teachers and administrators worry that the disciplinary rules for special education students harm the administration of discipline throughout schools, a view supported in a report of the American Federation of Teachers (Bader, 1997). In this report Bader indicates that the IDEA and the courts have had a "chilling effect" on school districts, who "...think twice before they start on the road to resolving a problem created by a student with a disability who presents a behavior problem" (Bader, 1997) and that "...students who experience no consequences for antisocial behavior become more daring, coming to expect that they will not be held accountable for their actions" (Bader, 1997).

In response to these concerns about a disciplinary double standard, Congress authorized a study to determine how IDEA's regulations for discipline affected the ability of schools to maintain a safe environment (Shaul, 2001). The survey study, which involved more than 400 middle and high school principals across the country, found that IDEA regulations only played a limited role in a school's ability to properly discipline students. About three fourths of the administrators said policies for disciplining special education students had a positive or neutral effect on school safety and orderliness. However, about 27% of the principals said different disciplinary procedures for special education students were unfair, and 20% said that the disciplinary procedures under IDEA were burdensome and time-consuming. And, even though the majority of administrators had no concern with IDEA disciplinary requirements, the principals reported that local rules for special education students did harm their ability to discipline properly. Sixty-four percent of the principals said local policies kept them from suspending special education students for more than 10 cumulative days in a year, even though IDEA allows the practice (Shaul, 2001). At the same time, 36% of principals indicated that local rules required their school to provide educational services to a special education student for any day of suspension.

During the 2000-2001 school years, more than 91,000 special education students in the United States were removed from their normal school settings for disciplinary reasons; a number representing approximately 1.4 percent of all students who received services in public schools that year (Shaul, 2003). Because little was known about where these special education students were placed, Congress authorized a study of this issue.

The resulting survey found that most special education students were removed from their regular setting for 10 days or less and that they were primarily placed in either in ISS or OSS at home. What may be seen from these studies is that discipline involving special needs students has created serious concerns for teachers and administrators. Regulations to go in effect in late 2005 may (or may not improve the ambiguity associated with OSS but in any case it seems likely that increased consideration will be given to ISS.

Zero Tolerance

As a result of mission development of the middle school student, discipline procedures have grown nation-wide and throughout the states. As a result of zero tolerance and referral removal rates at the middle school level like at Caden Middle School are challenged by data that demonstrates incomplete academic success. The public's perceptions that school campuses were inherently unsafe led to the Gun- Free Schools Act of 1994. This Act, although originally a gun-related bill, is often believed to be the genesis of zero-tolerance policies (Christensen, 2003). The act required schools to expel automatically for 1-year students who bring a gun to school. Any school that failed to implement this law risked losing federal education funds. Shortly after national adoption of weapons-related zero tolerance, school districts began extending the policy's purview to other undesirable behavior such as drugs, violence, threats, classroom disruptions, hate speech, and fighting (Advancement Project & Civil Rights Project, 2000).

The Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) requires each state to submit an annual report that provides the following information: the number of students expelled (by firearm

type and the school level), the number of expulsions shortened, and the number of expelled students sent to alternative school (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). The Florida Department of Education, Division of Public Schools and Community Education, Bureau of Equity, Safety and School Support, keeps statewide data for expelled students (1998- 1999 and 1999-2000 Statewide Report on School Safety and Discipline Data, 2001). These data include violent acts, alcohol and drugs, property crimes, weapons possession, and fighting. School boards have the legal right to separate a student from the district if the offense/s falls within the guidelines of the Education Code for expulsion (Florida Department of Education, 2006).

Governing boards, in many cases, are not well versed in the best educational options that will help to rehabilitate a child and return the child to mainstream educational programs as quickly as possible (Skiba & Noam, 2002). The critical issues arise when a child is expelled from school for a zero tolerance offense, and the parents are given options that are not consistent with what they believe is in the best interest of their child (Carpenter, 2004). For the purposes of the study, a zero tolerance policy was defined as a school district policy that mandates predetermined consequence/s or punishment for specific offenses (Christensen, 2003). Although expulsion is widely used, empirical studies of expulsion are relatively rare (Costenbader & Markson, 1997). Skiba (2000) also notes that very few empirical studies exist on the effectiveness of expulsion. In light of heightened public concern over school violence, school district administrators have increased their reliance on exclusionary measures as a means of deterring and punishing students who are violent on campus (Price, 2002).

The removal of students from the school setting for disciplinary purposes has been one of the most commonly used practices for dealing with students who exhibit problem behaviors (Lyons, 2003). Sautner (2001) reported that although expulsions were used, “no school district was able to demonstrate its effectiveness in improving student conduct”. In short, if the threat of removal, suspension, does not work to prevent students from behaving violently, then such students will be expelled so their behavior cannot further endanger their peers on the mainstream campuses and zero tolerance policies are followed. This current way of thinking supports literature that engages in discourse that suggests that the public school system itself assist in the institutionalization of students of color by utilizing practices and policies that promote the “Pipeline to Prison”.

Historical Perspectives of In-School Suspension

Many developments in in-school suspension programs over the last twenty years have affected the way schools discipline students. Historically, students’ disciplinary issues have been handled in a punitive way, as early attempts were made to establish in-school suspension programs. In-school suspension programs developed during the 1970’s continued to show promise through the turn of the twenty-first century. O’Brien 1976 described the earliest insights into in-school suspension programs as practiced in four suburban Minneapolis schools in 1971. According to O’Brien, it was “three-fourths education and one fourth punishment. The major component of the Minneapolis program was to teach students to accept the consequences for their actions and to make them think about what they’re doing”.

Sullivan (1989) reported that “the late 80’s ISS programs were commonplace”. Paula Short 1988, also stated, “The predominate goal of most ISS programs appeared to be . . . excluding the problem student from the regular classroom while continuing to provide some type of educational experience”. The following recommendation was made by Sullivan (1989). “The ISS goal should incorporate a developmental or rehabilitative focus that assumes misbehavior is a symptom of an underlying problem that must be identified and resolved” (Sullivan, 1989). According to Howard and Morris, (2003): “Historically, problem students have been kept after school, paddled, or suspended from school”. These methods have been somewhat ineffective for a number of reasons. Keeping scholars after school is frequently problematic because of school bus schedules and/or guardians who work far-off from the school. Many school districts no longer use or even attempt to defend corporal punishment, (Sheets, 1996).

Sheets (1996) defined in-school suspension as “a program to which a student is assigned because of disruptive behavior for a specific amount of time” (Sheets, 1996). Concerning discipline, research has defined school discipline as having two goals: “to ensure the safety of staff and students, and create an environment conducive to learning. Effective school discipline strategies seek to encourage responsible behavior and to provide all students with a satisfying school experience as well as to discourage misconduct” (Gaustad, 1992). Major (1990) posited, “We punish so that students will know a rule is a rule, not just a request” Students lose more learning time with disruptive behavior during class time. Some students “struggle academically and are disengaged; in addition, large numbers of students with mental health problems and deficits in social-

emotional competence have difficulty learning or disrupt the educational experiences of their peers”, Benson, Scales, Leffert, & Roehlkepartain, (1999). Gottfredson, Gottfredson, and Hybl (1993) “calculate that in six schools in Charleston, South Carolina, students lost 7,932 instructional days-44 years!-to in-school and out-of-school suspensions in a single academic year” Gottfredson, Gottfredson, and Hybl (1993).

According to Blomberg (2000): “In-school suspension arose because many were frustrated with the discipline design of out of school suspension, and its impact on student drop-out and dis-connectivity to schools”. Often it was felt that a more rehabilitative model of discipline, which offered positive supports for students who cause problems, could be more effective than the exclusionary model of out of school suspension or OSS. Blomberg defined ISS as a: Discipline model where a student is removed from the classroom and compelled to stay in an ISS center for a variable length of time, ranging from part of a day to several days in a row.

The ISS center is a precise staffed room where innumerable behavior altering strategies, extending from punitive to rehabilitative actions that effort to stop or change student misconduct without having the student detached from the school environment, (Blomberg, 2000). Several ISS programs were showing potential in reducing the out-of-school suspension rate, but some educators distrusted the ISS design in its present form. On the other hand, Tomczyk (2000) viewed ISS as working “so effectively that it dramatically changes the discipline climate and suspension rate in their school”, Tomczyk, (2000). Blomberg (2000) also argued, “Several research works that see problems with the current ISS framework, but do mention the limited success that ISS

has achieved”, Short and Noblit (1985). Short and Noblit (1985) studied ten “successful” ISS programs which showed that if all three components, punitive, academic, and therapeutic, were presented, students had a better chance of changing their behavior, and thereby reducing suspension rates: A school, one of the largest studied, had condensed out-school-suspension from One-hundred and sixty students the preceding year to one student for the first six months of this year, while referring only fifty students to the ISS. ISS programs must deal with only one cluster of disrupters - by using in-school suspension and developing the class skipping, truancy, tardiness, and all other nonviolent less disruptive acts. Students who get into trouble in schools are not all alike; there are the avoiders, the disrupters, the assaulters, the troublemakers, etc.

In Butchart and McEwan’s (1998) discussion of helping students who have disciplinary issues, they verified that schools were considering adding school psychologists and counselors to help students understand their “stress, anxiety, and frustration” Butchart and McEwan’s (1998). Butchart and McEwan stated, “Psychologists and counselors introduced a therapeutic view of behavior, thus calling for therapeutic interventions and mental hygiene to help students understand why they misbehave”. The research of Lordon (1983), and Wayson and Pinnell (1982) suggested, “School administrators must play a central role in establishing effective school discipline and consequently effective in-school suspension programs”, Wayson & Pinnell, (1982). Black and Downs (1992) “urged administrators to regard disciplinary referrals as opportunities to teach students valuable social skills that will promote success in future employment as well as in school”. The researchers have presented detailed procedures

for “de-escalating disruptive behavior, obtaining and maintaining instructional control, teaching alternative behaviors, and preparing students for classroom re-entry”; Black and Downs, (1992). Several research studies contended that punitive approaches only decrease academic achievement.

In an article entitled *Keeping Children in School*, a principal reported, “Suspension does not change students’ behavior. Behavioral problems decline when students are actively engaged in learning and helped to succeed. Researchers have shown that suspensions can “interfere with academic achievement and the social development of students”, which can widen the achievement gap among students of color, (Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Public Schools, 1992,). According to Sugai, Horner, Dunlap, Heneman, and Lewis, (2000), “Punitive approaches also hinder academic achievement. When students are being punished, isolated, or suspended, they are not learning”.

Behavioral examination suggested that environmental changes were: For example, being clear about behavioral expectations, directly coaching appropriate behavior, so long as support to assist students in meeting expectations, monitoring individual and school wide behavior and providing frequent positive reinforcement . . . can reduce discipline problems and help teachers and students recover instructional time. Hochman and Worner (1987) argued: Many educators believe group-counseling intervention with students placed at risk, can increase students’ self-esteem and their awareness of self-defeating attitudes and behaviors, help students set and follow through on personal goals, and contribute to building effective problem-solving skills.

Certain studies specify that group therapy can reduce absenteeism, increase attendance, raise academic outcomes, and improve student behavior, Hochman and Worner, (1987). In addition, Hochman and Worner believed, “In-school suspension, in and of itself, does not improve self-concepts. If schools wish to change the behavior of students that in-school suspension must have a therapeutic component”.

Huff (1988) suggested a plan entitled Personalized Behavior Modification (PBM) that he believed should be a part of an in-school suspension program. The program used a “therapeutic in-school suspension system to teach middle school youngsters (Grades 6, 7, and 8) who are maladjusted or show problem behavior the fundamentals of responsible school behavior”. This work was based on cognitive-behavioral and behavioral tenets of Ellis (1962), Glasser (1965), Homme (1969), Mamchak (1976), and Kendell and Breswell (1985). “The program works on the premise that troubled adolescents can be taught to control school behaviors so that they are more able to perform to their potential than before” (Homme, 1969).

The PBM program has shown some promise of students changing their behavior for a certain period of time: Students return to regular classes on their own, some maintain positive changes for many weeks and months and some for only a few weeks before they begin to slip back to old behaviors. When a student does slip back to old behaviors, the display of these behaviors is generally less frequent and intense than before PBM (Huff, 2008). Major’s (1990) book on discipline is of particular relevance to this study because of the researcher’s focus on the impact of punishment on students’

self-image and education. According to Major: Punishment can cause retaliatory behavior that is undesirable.

If intense enough, punishment can eliminate a behavior that is both good and bad. For example, punishing a student for talking in class may cause him to terminate participation entirely. Therefore, the punishment is harmful unless we also tell the student what constitutes desirable behavior Major, (1990). Several researchers raised suspicions about the success of ISS. For example, McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum (2002) suggested, “Harsh discipline works against connection; instead of reducing misbehavior and vandalism, such discipline actually promotes these problems”. Canter and Canter (1992) noted: Before rules, rewards, and consequences can be effective, you have to build relationships with students and earn their respect.

Too many kids have been let down by the adults in their lives. You have to demonstrate that you’re fair, that you stick by your word, that you care Canter and Canter, (1992). Tobin, Sugai, and Colvin (1996) “found that, for some students, suspension is primarily a predictor of further suspension, prompting the authors to conclude that for these students suspension functions as a reinforcer rather than a punisher”. When students are assigned in-school suspension, they are separated from everyone and are expected to complete their assignments in isolation. Brown and Birrane (1994) noted, “Isolation from classmates and exclusion from school and related activities can be devastating. Depending on the reason for the length of the removal, some kids will never return”, Brown and Birrane, (1994). Research showed that there was a “direct correlation between suspensions and expulsions and delinquency rates” (Phi Delta

Kappa Center for Evaluation, 1998,). An article titled, What Are the Alternatives to Suspension, captured the notion that “Just as students should not be allowed to ‘escape’ school via suspension, teachers should not use ISS as a way to escape dealing with a student” (UCLA Center for Mental Health, 2005)

In a 2005 article in the Hartford Courant entitled, Educators Weigh Plan for Alternative School, Moreau acknowledged that school officials were considering a proposal for an alternative middle school program to help students whose academic skills and behavior in the classroom are substandard. The proposal would serve students who are academically two to three years below their grade level and are struggling to function in middle school. It is not envisioned as punishment for unruly students, although behavioral problems and low self-esteem often go with poor academic performance, according to staff report. The Assistant Superintendent stated that the “primary focus is not a behavioral approach. It is an academic approach that seeks to build the kids up The goal of this program is to return students to the mainstream classroom in time for high school, if not sooner” Moureau (1999). According to Mendez and Sanders (1981), “Close examination of in-school suspension programs may reveal that their effectiveness has not been as complete as expected or claimed”. Mendez and Sanders also reported the results of a survey of forty schools across the nation with the following characteristics and practices: (a) some degree of counseling was performed; (b) a single teacher instructor was used; students were isolated from the general population; (c) students were given regular academic assignments; strict behavior codes were enforced; and (d) parent had to participate in re-entry process in order for students

to attend regular classes again. Angiolillo's (1986) research provided more evidence that effective in-school suspension needed to have administration and teachers involved in the implementation of a successful program.

The in-school suspension programs studied by Angiolillo included the following characteristics: academic work being provided by their regular teachers; administration was responsible for referrals to in-school suspension; and regular classrooms in the school building were used. Students fail to graduate if they are suspended too many times. (Diem, 1988; Johnson, 1989). An article written by Wendy Schwartz (1996) confirmed that students who dropped out of school had disciplinary problems, had been assigned to in-school suspension, out-school suspension, or had been expelled. Stage (1997) states: "There were no apparent effects of the in-schools suspension interventions on classroom disruptive behavior, since there were no systemic differences in disruptive classroom behavior by in-school suspension phase. In fact, the rate of student disruptive behavior remained rather constant across the four in-school suspension interventions, indicating that no type of in-school suspension generalized to classroom behavior any more efficaciously than another". However, several studies showed that keeping students in in-school suspension instead of putting them on out-of-school suspension was more effective in keeping students connected to the school environment. Several researchers, including Guindon (1992), believed that "A successful ISS program must provide not only educational support but also counseling to improve a student's behavioral insight".

"Recent investigations of ISS programs show that failed or minimally successful programs often do not provide a counseling component", Guindon, (1992). Several ISS

programs are showing promise in helping school districts keep students in a nurturing environment. Winborne (1980) acknowledged, “Keeping suspended students at school, but isolated from other students makes more sense and is more effective than giving them a ‘vacation’ away from school”. He examined an in-school suspension program that showed some promise: The King William County Model is designed as a therapeutic model to help those students in grades 8-12, who would otherwise be suspended out of school, to overcome the educational disadvantages of minority group isolation.

This program is successful because students are kept in the educational environment; their chances for successful re- entry into the classrooms are greatly increased” Winborne, (1980). Shulman (2006) cited a program that was being developed at Harvey Austin Middle School. This program was: Designed for students who have been removed from their classes for inappropriate classroom behavior. Such removals can last for an hour or a day. The students are provided with support in a separate classroom where in pairs or informal small groups, staff provides help in anger management, effective communication and violence prevention. Individual and group counseling helps the students understand why they are in trouble, what they can do to return to their class successfully and how they can stay out of trouble. Martin, (1979) described an in-school suspension program called the “The Slammer.” It offered another alternative to out-of-school suspension. “The Slammer” had the following aspects: it punishes the offenders, not the entire student body for the rule infractions; offers punishment without delay and spells out a fair system of justice that students respect;

provides a rehabilitative program to meet a wide variety of student needs; affords an occasional retreat for troubled youngsters; prevents school dropout; offers a preventive program for offenders; is seen as a logical disciplinary measure by faculty and parents. In their study Prior and Tuller (1991) described how an ISS reduced OSS numbers substantially: "In a large-scale report of a district in Des Moines, Iowa and its ten public middle schools and five public high schools, the positive result of ISS is celebrated by the fact that OSS suspensions were rigorously reduced, because a district goal was to make half of all suspensions in school".

Prior and Tuller cited the students' reactions to their in-school suspension experience. The vice principal stated, "When I hear students talk about their ISS experience, they often mention something about the counsel they received". Opuni, Kwam, Tullis, Sanches, and Gonzalez (1990) recognized an in-school suspension program in the Houston Public Schools called the Student Referral Center (SRC). This platform had a positive influence on the outlooks of the teachers, because it gave them another discipline option in controlling their classes.

The National Institute of Education's (1978-80) descriptive data revealed, "Discipline improved as result of the existence of in-school alternative" (Chobot & Garibaldi, 1982). In-school suspension should be more academically based than punitive (Morris & Howard, 2003). Sanders (2001) cited a program for middle school students called The Student Advisory Center (SAC). The purpose of the program was to help students make positive behavior changes. This program also worked with students on building academic achievement and increased self-esteem. The middle school program

was based on a quote by Sergioivanni and Moore (1989): “The children we teach will not care how much we know until they know how much we care”. The key people that worked with the students in the (SAC) or in-school suspension program were the principal, in-school suspension teacher, and counselor. Students had an exit interview that sometimes included the parents.

According to a report by NCES, “Data on suspension consistently show that referrals for drugs, weapons, and gang-related behaviors were leading to suspension” Peterson & Skiba, (1999). Most studies have shown that students who are suspended or expelled have poor academic skills. This report stated minorities are overrepresented in disciplinary actions; most schools that used suspension and expulsion showed the highest rates of suspension discipline reports.

In a recent policy research report by Skiba, Micheal, Nardo, and Peterson (2002), the authors suggested that a disproportional amount of minority students were being suspended than white students. In 1999 the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights reported, “Rates of suspension among Black students were between two and three times higher than suspension rates for White students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels”. School suspension was used for minor offenses such as disrespect, attendance, and classroom disruption. Students, who were interested in reducing their chances of being suspended, would transfer to a school with a lower suspension rate instead of trying to improve their attitudes or behavior (Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). In an article on school violence, the researchers acknowledged: “Out-

school suspension is among the most common consequences for disciplinary infractions”.

The article affirmed, “Suspension appears to be used with greater frequency in urban areas than in suburban or rural areas”. Ramsey, Walker, Shinn, and O’Neill (1989), working in the field of developmental psychopathology, purported: For an adolescent at risk for antisocial behavior then, it seems unlikely that school suspension will successfully impact behavior. Rather, suspension may simply accelerate the course of delinquency by providing a troubled youth with little parental supervision and more opportunities to socialize with deviant peers. In an article entitled *Keeping Guns Out of Schools*, McGiboney (1995) acknowledged the school had a successful alternative program to out-of-school suspension that included three key components: academic, counseling, and role-playing. The program also gave extra help to students who had difficulty with reading or math. Students must successfully complete all of the above components before returning to their home school. In Georgia, a non-punitive alternative program called the “Gateway Program” used a therapeutic approach. Students were placed in the program through a committee, which reviewed every case. Some of the reasons a student would be placed in the program were due to incidents such as blatant disrespect, or an accumulation of rule violations.

One of the biggest components of the “Gateway Program” was the counseling. Students attended group counseling, which sometimes built relationships and rapport with the counselors. Students also requested individual counseling with different staff (Davis, 1994). Dr. Judy Willis (2006), in *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student*

Learning, said that adolescents' brains are undergoing development changes that can cause erratic behavior; teens may have difficulty communicating ideas and feelings, making wise decisions, or establishing consistent self-identities. The researcher also argued that teens need support during this period of flux, and that they need to be provided help to build that sense of community and their self-confidence. Dr. Willis believed that teachers have the capacity to help students reduce stress that can affect their judgments and behaviors. In addition, Willis suggested that to get teens through the adolescent years, schools needed to plan and provide services that will help their emotional state of mind. "Planning and providing the most effective emotional atmosphere is especially important for teens". This research supported the fact that in an ISS program, schools must include not only the punitive and academic, but also a therapeutic component to address students' emotional issues on how to deal with different situations without converting to disrespect or violence. Dr. Willis concurred, "Academic performance and behavior improve when stress is reduced and emotional comfort is raised (Willis, 2006).

Curriculum Perspective Regarding the Use of ISS

Another feature of this literature review was to examine the curriculum and hidden curriculum of ISS. It was argued that an in-school suspension program needed a curriculum orientation (Gushee, 1984). Cornbleth (1990) stated, "Our curriculum conceptions, ways of reasoning and practice cannot be value free or neutral. Conceptions emerge from and enter into practice". Curriculum perspective regarding the use of ISS suggested that we need to develop an in-school suspension program from a curricular

base for the at-risk student to make such programs more effective. This would be the case with current ISS programs where management systems needed to be developed to enhance and create curriculum for ISS. Management systems would be developed with constituent questionnaires and focus group discussions. This information would be used to develop curriculum for ISS. Cornbleth acknowledged: Curriculum as contextualized social process encompasses both subject matter and social organization and their interrelations.

Social organization, including teacher and student roles (and their attendant rights and obligations) and patterns of interaction, provides a setting for academic activities that can extend or constrain students' learning opportunities. It may be that the "absence" of curriculum from the ISS constrains opportunities. These constraints might originate in what might be termed the hidden curriculum. Martin (1976) stated, "Hidden curriculum is always of some setting, and there is no reason to suppose that different settings will have identical hidden curricula". The author acknowledged: A hidden curriculum is not something one just finds; one must go hunting for it. Since a hidden curriculum is a set of learning states, ultimately one must find out what is learned as a result of the practices, procedures, rules, relationships, structures, and physical characteristics which constitute a given setting. Martin later revised her definition of the hidden curriculum. "A hidden curriculum consists of those learning states of a setting which are either unintended or intended but not openly acknowledged to the learners". Martín, (1976).

Vallance (1983) expanded the definition of hidden curriculum as “the social structure of the classroom, the teacher’s exercise of authority, the rules governing the relationship between teacher and student”. McNeil (1996) believed: The hidden curriculum can be a vehicle for moral growth. It can reflect an atmosphere of justice, giving all a chance to share in planning and executing activities and in gaining the rewards of their accomplishments as part of fair play. This curriculum, more than the formal curriculum, determines to a significant degree the participants’ sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

Today’s youth are more concerned with self-identity than conformity. Unlike former youths, youth of today are more likely to break with established values and beliefs. McNeil continued: Hidden curriculum refers to unofficial instructional influences, which may either support or weaken the attainment of manifest goals. Hidden curriculum indicates that some of the outcomes of schooling are not formally recognized. The hidden curriculum is portrayed as a powerful detrimental force that undermines the professed commitment of schools to intellectual development and democratic community. Different school circumstances might create different experiences depending upon the student. According to Dreeban (1970), students respond differently to school routines: Different atmospheres may produce cheats, conformists, rebels, and recluses. Pupils derive their principles of conduct from their experiences in responding to school tasks. Hence, a school staff should concern itself with socialization and other effects that follow from particular elements of their hidden curriculum.

Recognizing the effects of school discipline could create a very frustrating situation for staff members who should be concerned with the sort of personalities that are being developed. Asking the question, “What kind of character is being produced by our practices of grading, grouping, and detention?” could make a substantial difference in the way curriculum is developed. Jean Anyon (1978) argued, “Just as school curriculum has hitherto support patterns of power and domination, so can it be used to foster autonomy and social change”. If curriculum is created and used properly, social adjustments occur because behavior reflects positive changes. If a child is taught self-respect and how to think for himself, then he will foster transformations within a school environment and ultimately in that child’s society.

The existence of “Hidden Curriculum” has been widely debated. Some believe that it can be used to enhance educational environments. Kohlberg (1983) stated that he “would use the hidden curriculum to reflect an atmosphere of justice, giving all a chance to share in planning and executing activities, and in gaining the rewards of what they have accomplished as part of fair play”. No school is without a hidden curriculum that affects students and faculty; hidden curriculum determines to a significant degree all participants’ sense of worth and self-esteem. Sirotnik (1991) believed: Curriculum includes the purposes and functions of schools and schooling and the ways in which schools and the delivery of education are organized. Curriculum includes not only the content of subject matters, but also how knowledge is organized, how teachers teach, how learners learn, and how the whole is evaluated. This study sought to examine in-school suspension from the perspective of curriculum inquiry. Sirotnik further

contended, “Curriculum inquiry is not about trivial issues. It is about issues, and important issues have at their core, fundamental beliefs, values, and human interests at stake”. Cornbleth explained the development of curriculum construction as “an ongoing social activity that is shaped by various contextual influences within and beyond the classroom and accomplished interactively, primarily by teachers and students”. This is similar to Oliver (1982) who stated, “Curriculum is all the experiences the child has, regardless of when or how they take place, all the experiences the learner has under the guidance of the school”. Greene (1983) acknowledged, “If the student is enabled to recognize that reason and order may represent the culminating step in his constitution of a world”. The author added: Curriculum can offer the possibility for students to be the makers of such networks. The problem for their teachers is to stimulate an awareness of the questionable, to aid in the identification of the thematically relevant, to beckon beyond the everyday.

In his book, *What Works in School*, Marzano (2003) used several definitions of curriculum that have been used throughout the twenty-first century. Marzano (2003) cited Caswell and Campbell (1935) who defined curriculum as “all of the experiences children have under the guidance of the teacher”. In addition, Marzano included Saylor and Alexander (1974) who contended, “Curriculum encompasses all learning opportunity provided by the school”. Finally, he acknowledged that for Oliva (1982), “curriculum is a plan or program for experiences which the learner encounters under the direction of the school”.

Tanner (1978) supported the view that the “curriculum should consist of whatever is needed to make children competent, and self-directed people; to develop a constructive attitude toward society and habits of considering others”. Accordingly, such attitude and behavior are part of the curriculum and must be consciously taught. The curriculum “should be whatever is needed to make children competent, self-directing people. This would include both the academic and social-skills areas” Tanner (1978). The importance of the curricula supporting consistency in program delivery of positive behavioral outcomes and the prevention or decrease of social health, and school problems were addressed in the work of Greenberg, O’Brien, Zins, Resnik, and Elias (2003) who noted, “Well implemented school-biased prevention and youth development programming can positively influence a diverse array of social, health, and academic outcomes” Greenberg, O’Brien, Zins, Resnik, and Elias (2003). Likewise, Johns, Carr, and Hoots (1997) concluded that in-school suspension curriculum should stand alone and should have learning skills that included behavior management segments in order to provide for positive reinforcement.

History of Approaches for Addressing Problem Behaviors in Schools reviews the history of school discipline practices and provides a timeline for the development of the PBS approach.

This section is relevant to the dissertation because it offers the reader additional insight into the context in which the development of PBS occurred, as well as an explanation as to why innovative frameworks for addressing problem behaviors in schools were needed. The second section, Positive Behavior Supports, describes the

aims of PBS and the specifics of how PBS emerged. A widely accepted framework for delivering PBS in schools is also presented. This section is relevant to the dissertation because it is important to understand the foundation upon which behavior support initiatives are based. The reader must have a general understanding of the levels of intervention that are a part of the PBS framework.

History of Approaches for Addressing Problem Behaviors in Schools

Teachers have been faced with students exhibiting problem behaviors since the days of the one room schoolhouse. Numerous anecdotal reports of children standing in corners and wearing dunce caps have been shared by generations of grandparents. Since the turn of the last century, however, the number and intensity of discipline problems in schools has increased dramatically. The days in which educators' biggest concerns were of placing frogs in the teacher's water glass or dipping pig-tails in ink wells are gone. School discipline problems appear in the news on an all too frequent basis, citing physical violence, property damage, homicide, and suicide.

Today, school violence is so prevalent that there have even been incidents of adolescent students making serious violent threats and carrying out those threats in some cases. As a result of the increase in intensity and frequency of serious behavior problems, school districts have developed comprehensive discipline procedures that include catching future instances of problem behaviors via close monitoring, restating rules and consequences for undesirable behaviors, having a continuum of consequences for repeat offenders, exercising consistency in how staff responds to problem behaviors, and emphasizing final consequences to inhibit future problem behaviors (Sugai &

Horner, 2002). When the school discipline approaches listed above fail to reduce serious challenging behaviors, and the number and intensity of problem behaviors continue to rise, school districts have reacted by initiating zero tolerance policies, hiring security guards, installing surveillance cameras and metal detectors, mandating school uniforms, implementing detention, suspension, and expulsion procedures, and assigning alternative school placements (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

These discipline practices have been based on an underlying assumption that the behavior problems displayed by students are discrete; each instance of problem behavior is viewed and addressed as a separate, unrelated issue. Such practices fail to consider the context in which the behaviors occur, and fail to incorporate a systems level approach for reducing challenging behaviors. Moreover, these disciplinary interventions fail to teach students new skills for dealing with intense emotional situations that trigger undesirable behavior outbursts. During the period of the 1960s through the 1980s, strategies for behavior change were based on positivistic research grounded in operant learning punishment principles.

The use of aversive techniques was widely accepted in treating individuals with severe disabilities and severe behavior problems (Lovaas, Schaeffer, & Simmons, 1965 as cited in Dunlap, Sailor, Horner, & Sugai, 2009). However, when the movement toward deinstitutionalization appeared in the 1980s, a mismatch between the use of aversive measures to reduce challenging behaviors and the moral values of the community emerged. By the early 1980s, positivistic research began to examine the secondary effects of aversive treatment such as outbursts, anxiety, and avoidance (Favell

& Rincover, 1983 as cited in Dunlap, 2009). The 1980s saw a paradigm shift in the treatment of severely challenging behaviors. Not only were aversive treatments thought to be morally distasteful, but there was also recognition that in order to increase quality of life, challenging behaviors must not only be reduced, but positive behaviors must also be increased. Research began to focus on why problem behaviors occurred, which led to applied behavior analysis (ABA) and functional analysis of behaviors (Dunlap, 2009). Rather than an emphasis on punishment to alter problem behaviors, an emphasis on the need for preventative practices emerged. By 1987, the United States Department of Education funded research for non-aversive behavior interventions, which led to the coining of a new term, school-wide positive behavior support or (SWPBS).

School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

The Application of Positive Behavior Supports is the final section of this chapter. This section reviews the elements of SWPBS as they are applied in schools and alternative settings. Most of the current literature on SWPBS is focused on implementation at school age grade levels (kindergarten through high school) and not in in-school suspension settings. This discussion, therefore, is relevant to the record of study because it lays the groundwork for expanding the application of SWPBS to alternative disciplinary programs. This supports the task of the problem of practice because it underscores the need to implement early intervention behavioral programs in in-school suspension settings.

The SWPBS framework mandated for use at Caden Middle School with a 90% staff voting is presented and each level of support in the framework is reviewed in this

section. The Bring-Together independent school district does not approve implementation of the SWPBS or PBIS program without the staff approval. An understanding of this particular SWPBS model is relevant to the problem of practice because this is the model that is being evaluated in the referral reduction task. This is a relevant aspect of the dissertation since it provides an underlying basis for understanding the need to further evaluate SWPBS programs in in-schools suspension settings. It provides the foundation for selecting an evaluation approach which may extend the literature in this area.

The aim of SWPBS is to decrease problem behaviors and increase positive behaviors in order to influence the quality of life for individuals with behavioral disabilities or other disorders that impact behavior (Carr, 2007; Carr, 2002; Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2009). SWPBS describes an approach for meeting the needs of children exhibiting challenging behaviors that examines the purpose of the behavior and focuses on teaching new skills to replace challenging behaviors. SWPBS originally focused on the development of behavior support plans to help children and adults who exhibited challenging behavior.

More recently, SWPBS has been implemented at school-wide and program-wide levels. In these settings, all school staff work together to teach behavioral expectations and social skills, and to provide individualized interventions to those students most at risk for future problems (Fox, 2005). Carr and colleagues highlighted that PBS emerged from three major areas. First, applied behavior analysis provided basic terminology and

concepts that have contributed to the formulation of SWPBS such as stimulus-response, setting events, reinforcing consequences, shaping, and prompting. Applied behavior analysis also gave rise to functional analysis, which serves to identify the purpose of behaviors via specific assessment procedures. Second, the normalization/inclusion movement that emerged over the past 150 years (Carr, 2002) extended rights to individuals and groups who have been marginalized by mainstream society. This has led to current educational practices of including students with disabilities with regular education students rather than segregating them into self-contained special education classrooms. Third, PBS looks to person-centered values to inform strategies that serve to “enhance personal dignity and opportunities for choice” (Carr, 2002). Carr and colleagues (2002) outlined how functional behavior investigation, the regularization/inclusion movement, and person-centered values have given birth to SWPBS as a new, but still evolving applied science. It is the manner in which the critical features of SWPBS are integrated, however, that make SWPBS a unique approach to addressing challenging behaviors.

SWPBS offers a comprehensive lifestyle change for behaviorally challenged individuals and their families, via a life-span perspective rather than a short-term approach. It also offers ecological validity and meaningful application in real-world settings. The application of PBS is a collaborative process involving participants from different systems in conjunction with interventions that are practical and desirable for stakeholders. Further, SWPBS interventions are proactive rather than reactive. Another factor that is unique to SWPBS as a behavioral intervention approach is that participants

accept alternate scientific practices such as qualitative measures, self-reports, and interviews rather than requiring traditional experimental research methods. Moreover, SWPBS embraces multiple theoretical perspectives from ecological, environmental, and community psychology (Carr, 2002). Sugai and Horner (2002) developed a continuum of behavior supports based on a public health and disease prevention model.

The SWPBS continuum was designed to provide supports based on the relative needs of the students. In this framework, primary prevention refers to school- or classroom-wide supports for all students to reduce the likelihood of the development of problem behaviors. According to Sugai and Horner, primary prevention may include an emphasis on teaching appropriate behaviors and teaching practices that boost academic success, and may prevent problem behaviors among 80% of students. Secondary prevention will be needed by 15% of students and is aimed at reducing risk factors, such as poverty, and strengthening protective factors, such as additional school supports and family assistance. Tertiary prevention is aimed at the remaining 5% of students with high risk for problem behaviors and involves individualized systems supports.

The presentation of School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports one focus of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was on the use of SWPBS and functional behavior assessments (FBA) for students with disabilities. IDEA also required that schools apply the SWPBS approach to students who have not already been identified as eligible for special education if the school had knowledge that the student is at risk for needing special education services due to their behaviors (IDEA, 1997). The basis of such knowledge can be from parent or teacher reports, or if the behavior of the

student has demonstrated the need. This broad basis underscored the need for schools to adopt the SWPBS approach for all students, which resulted in the development of school-wide PBS (SWPBS; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Sugai and Horner (2002) identified four key elements of SWPBS: outcomes defined and valued by stakeholders; research validated practices; data-driven decision making; and a process level perspective (committees, families, administrative leadership, etc.). To make these elements more manageable and behavioral changes more sustainable, Sugai and Horner emphasized the need to organize a multi-systems approach that includes school-wide, classroom, non-classroom, and individual student perspectives.

In the SWPBS framework, behavior supports are placed on a continuum based upon the needs of the student, and a model of prevention is embraced by all stakeholders and applied to all students. This model points toward examining how the school functions as a whole, rather than looking to classroom management styles of one teacher or the behavior of one student. Accordingly, Sugai and Horner (2002) outlined a five-step process for implementing SWPBS. These steps are (1) Establish a school leadership team; (2) Secure school-wide supports from staff; (3) Develop data-based action plans; (4) Arrange for high fidelity of implementation; and (5) Conduct formative data-based monitoring. In 2002, there were about 500 schools across the nation implementing SWPBS (Sugai & Horner, 2002). By 2008, more than 5300 schools were implementing SWPBS (Frey, Lingo, & Nelson, 2008). A preponderance of case-based literature has indicated general success for SWPBS. For example, at an elementary school in Oregon, two third grade boys with serious behavior problems (i.e. hitting, self-injurious behavior,

eating staples, poking others with scissors, running away from school) and significant disabilities (i.e., emotionally disturbed, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder) exhibited significant reductions in problem behaviors when secondary tier interventions were used to support all third grade students in addition to the individualized behavior support plans that were developed specifically for these boys (Freeman, 2006). At an elementary school in Illinois, SWPBS was credited with preventing another 3rd grade boy from being classified as a student with a disability (Freeman, 2006). In this case, the boy was exhibiting a variety of problem behaviors and academic struggles. The support team developed a behavior support plan that closely involved family input and targeted teaching and reinforcing social and academic skills.

A Child Study Team (CST) evaluation that was initiated as part of the support process determined that the child had a learning disability. He was not classified, however, because the teacher and the CST recognized that he was making adequate progress with the new supports already in place as a result of SWPBS. Not only has SWPBS been shown to be effective in addressing the behavioral needs of students, it has also been credited with improving skills among teachers and support personnel. For example, in an urban school district in Southern California, behavior support plans were demonstrated to be more technically sound in schools where SWPBS was being implemented in comparison to schools that were not implementing SWPBS (Medley, Little, & Akin-Little, 2007). In still another example, a behavioral intervention plan for recess, which was embedded in SWPBS, not only resulted in reduced problem behaviors among children, but also increased the level of teacher supervision (Franzen & Kamps,

2008). SWPBS has also been shown to have favorable outcomes in alternate settings, having been credited with increasing positive behaviors in a correctional facility for male juvenile offenders (Feinstein, 2003).

SWPBS was focused on addressing severe disabilities and behaviors, and was based on research regarding applied behavior analysis from the early 1980s. By the early 1990s, the application of SWPBS expanded to not only the treatment of individuals with severe disabilities and behaviors, but it was also applied to the treatment of emotionally and behaviorally disturbed individuals. The event that spiraled SWPBS into school-based interventions was the 1997 Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which required the use of functional behavioral analysis (FBA) and the use of positive interventions as behavioral change strategies (Sugai and Horner, 2002; Turnbull, Wilcox, Stowe, and Turnbull, 2001). As a result of this mandate, there was so much interest in and research on PBS that in 1999 a new peer reviewed publication emerged, the Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, SWPBS was applied to early intervention with young children (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, and Strain, 2003). Sugai and Horner (2002) introduced a now widely accepted, multi-tiered framework for SWPBS. The application of SWPBS continued to expand.

In 2001, the NJDOE Division of Early Childhood Education mandated the use of PBS in all Abbott preschool programs (NJDOE, 2001). In 2003, the Association for Positive Behavior Support, which focused on promoting research strategies, person-focused ethics, and structures change to increase value of life and reduce problem behaviors, was founded. The increase in interest and use of PBS continued to soar. The

requirements to use FBA and PBS that were introduced in IDEA 1997 remained in IDEA 2004 (Office of Special Education Programs, OSEP, 2009). As part of the IDEA initiative, each state was required to establish a PBS technical assistance center and develop a website to support PBS implementation throughout school districts in their state. These technical assistance centers and websites are funded by IDEA 2004. Most recently, the NJDOE Preschool Program and Implementation Guidelines (NJDOE, 2008a) strengthened the mandate for the use of PBS by citing a specific PBS model: the Social Emotional Teaching Pyramid Model proposed by Fox, Jack, & Broyles (2005). This PBS model will be reviewed later in this chapter.

Ripple Effects

One of the intervention programs put in place in 2011-2012 school year in the Caden Middle School program was called Ripple Effects. This computer-based positive-behavior intervention and support system is a district-funded and support system that is currently being “piloted” at Caden Middle School. Caden Middle School was selected by the district based on the number of special education students that were being placed in the campuses in-school suspension program. This campus had one of the highest placement rates of special education students in the district.

Ripple Effects Research Background

The foundation of Ripple Effects is a wide and deep, multidisciplinary theory base, that draws from research and practice from five directions: Prevention Science, Education, Technology, Business, and the Humanities. A fully referenced description of

how insights from dozens of disciplines and hundreds of sub disciplines are woven into Ripple Effects software is documented in the monograph:

For more than a decade, the conceptual framework of Ripple Effect *Whole Spectrum Intervention System (WSIS)* has been largely hidden beneath the intuitive interface of Ripple Effects software, and/or woven directly into the multi-media content. This makes the program simple, engaging and accessible to users. It undoubtedly at least partly accounts for the system being recognized with 29 national and international awards across four industries. But it makes it more difficult for reviewers to evaluate the conceptual and evidence base that it rests on. Parts of that theoretical base are explicitly included in trainer and implementer manuals, including the rationales for use of specific scope and sequences of the program to achieve specific goals, and/or specific planning processes to ensure implementation success. Those simplified translations of various conceptual underpinnings serve the needs of line workers, who are asked to implement intervention programs with little time or resources to prepare for doing so.

Ripple Effects WSIS draws information from many credible sources. Information on prevalence and trends in substance abuse, social behavior, illness and injury comes mostly from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Personal and public safety information comes from various arms of the Justice Department, especially the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Educational statistics and research findings come from the U.S. Department of

Education (ED), Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), Office of Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), National Center for Education Research (NCER), as well as two major pieces of education legislation: No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

A substantial amount of information about the specialized field of social-emotional learning has come from publications of the nonprofit Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the American Institutes of Research (AIR). Ripple Effects WSIS also draws theory directly from many academic disciplines and traditions. Sources of these insights, strategies and processes are more disparate. They cross disciplines, cross cultures, cross boundaries of time and space. The sheer scope of this distributed knowledge requires some system for organizing it. This program is one of the major support systems that the district provided to the school to address both the overrepresentation of students of color, as well as students with disabilities. The program was began its implementation in the July 2011 and is currently still being carried out in the in-school suspension program.

Conclusion

The perceptions of the key stakeholders or the adults have important educational and disciplinary consequences for students in our schools, especially today. Given the importance of stakeholder perceptions on student eligibility for disability status in the more judgmental disability categories, such as Emotional/Behavioral Disorders

(Donovan & Cross, 2002), for example, and the impact of perceptions on disciplinary decisions, such as office referral, suspension, and expulsion (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002), a considerable case can be made for understanding the influences which play deeply into the development of these perceptions.

The diverse sources of research surveyed in this review of the literature on perceptions have all pinpointed significant contributions to the formation of policy and perceptions. Researchers studying the effects of student variables, such as student gender (Borg & Falzon, 1990; Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008), ethnicity (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002), and/or language proficiency (Edll, Jones, & Estell, 2008) are certainly also concerned with biases and how these might interfere with educator perceptions of unbiased information. There are fewer examples of research on the success of changing educator perceptions through the presentation of information, graphically or otherwise.

To the contrary, some literature (Teel, Bright, Manfredo, & Brooks, 2006) suggests that if bias has attached, perceptions may not be alterable. While some of the research results surveyed here are promising for the study at hand, challenges are posed by the wealth of research exploring the contribution of educator-intrinsic factors, such as teaching experience (Bibou-Nakou, Kiosseoglou, & Stogiannidou, 2000; Borg, 1998), teacher self-efficacy (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1981), and levels of burnout (Byrne, 1993; Egyed & Short, 2006; Friedman, 1994; Kokkinos, Panayiotou, & Davazoglou, 2005).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This record of study was a problem of practice. A problem of practice is used to define a specific existing educational problem. The problem is analyzed and interpreted based on relevant literature. Additionally, in a problem of practice, data is gathered, verified and the problem is explored within the context of a school or school district (Scheurich, 2009). This was a research project as described by Creswell (2007) designed to investigate the perceptions of parents, teachers, and administrators regarding their understanding of the implementation of positive behavior support systems and the impact that the system has on reduction of referral rates to in-school suspension programs among students of color. This chapter explains the methodology and process that was utilized to investigate the perceptions of key stakeholders as they understand positive behavior support implementation and its impact on referral reduction to the in-school suspension program with students of color. The first section of this chapter describes the qualitative methodology utilized by the researcher. Second, research design is outlined including data selection, data content, and analysis. The final section of this chapter explains procedures performed by the researcher to ensure trustworthiness.

This chapter emphasizes the research methodology and processes implored in the study, which is comprised of the following sections: purpose and objectives of the study,

population and sample, conceptual framework through which the student will be examined, interview procedures, and data analysis. (Shao, 2004).

This problem of practice is a record of study that is a case study. The “heuristic” quality of a case study makes it an appropriate selection for the nature of this study. In examining the perceptions or levels of self-efficacy, it is important to develop research instrument that will adequately collect the data need for analysis and developing thematic codes. A case study approach will allow the principal investigator to provide an explanation of the problem, give the readers the background and or situation, explain the innovation, or the change that worked or failed, discuss and reflect on alternatives not addressed, and evaluate, and conclude to produce a better success rate in implementation (Mirriam,1998). The research perspective will allow the principal investigator to view the problem of practice as a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries (Merriam, 1998).

This problem of practice sought to understand the recidivism rate of students of color, with a particular focus on African-American students, in an in-school suspension program as it relates to the implementation, and use of positive behavior support systems to the referral and placement rate among students of color. As this problem of practice will share, the students that were repeatedly placed in this setting are being excluded from pertinent instruction that is a constitutional right (NCLB, 2004). In-depth interviews from the perspective of the key stakeholders of the Bring-Together ISD community were used to determine what common perceptions and the themes of those perceptions for the purpose of those stakeholders for further dialogue and analysis. The

goal is to formulate a critique of their dialogue from the framework of critical theory. The qualitative method chosen is phenomenology. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), it is defined as a study of phenomena, it is the philosophical investigation and description of conscious experience in all its varieties without reference to the question of whether what is experienced is objectively real. It is safe to say the individual involved will be speaking from his own worldview, experiences and subjective interpretations to the data presented. Creswell (1998) states a phenomenological study describes the meaning of the experiences of individuals that encounter a phenomenon or concept under study. Digging deeper, phenomenology as a research method needs to be set in a wider context of research and what Kuhn (1970) calls a paradigm shift.

Questioning individuals on their perspectives on in school suspension appeared to be an appropriate method for using phenomenology as a qualitative method. However, there are constraints within using this method. This method can be described as interpretative and poetic if comparing it to the scientific method; however, if working from an emancipator view, the role of the researcher is limited. My job is the gather the information, group it into themes and analyze it. My analysis will be based upon the themes gathered from this process to understand how in-school suspension is perceived and how district policies are prescribed by those with power to make decisions. Using the phenomenology approach, data is collected in two ways: focusing on the participants' experiences or the researcher's experience in the phenomenon as an observant of participants (Patton, 2002). The phenomenological approach to data analysis involves four steps: description, extraction, transformation, and analysis.

- The researcher first reads all descriptions in their entirety. These narratives describe the human experience and consciousness of the participants in the study.
- The researcher extracts significant statements or meaning units' from each description.
- These statements are formulated into meanings, and these meanings are clustered into themes.
- The researcher integrates these themes into narrative description. (Creswell, 1998).

Kvale (1996) further describes this same process similarly: A phenomenological viewpoint includes a focus on life world candidness to the experiences of the subjects, a primacy of precise descriptions, attempts to bracket foreknowledge, and a search for invariant vital meanings in the description. A dialectical access focuses on the contradictions of a statement and their relations to the contradictions of the social and material world. There is an emphasis on the new, rather than on the status quo Kvale, (1996). Finally, the phenomenology approach allows for the immersion of the researcher into the lives of the participants to help synthesize their world view and to uncover and explain dialectical contradictions of their subjective perspectives that can collide with objective reality. The development of contradictions is the driving force of change.

Kvale (1996) argues that in dialectical thought there is an emphasis upon the new, what is under development. He further argues that it is important to uncover the new developmental tendencies in order to obtain true knowledge of the social world. My goal is to understand how influential perspectives hinder or improve social progress, to uncover what is prevailing truth on the in-school suspension as it relates to students of color being excluded from instruction based on non-serious and subjective discipline

practices. What are the driving views that are emerging and how can educational leaders help the process of social change. Presentation of influential individual perspectives will provide the researcher the opportunity to gain understanding of their worldview, opinions and observations. Direct quotes from the participants will be used in the study as an attempt to portray the participants as individual entities.

Method

This was a qualitative study that used in-depth interviewing as the method of data collection. A text analysis approach was used to analyze the collected data. The following research questions were addressed:

Research Questions

The research questions include:

1. How do the primary key stakeholders (i.e. parents, teachers, administrators) experience the in-school suspension (ISS) process and placement of students at Caden Middle School experience the process?
 - a. What are the perceptions of parents?
 - b. What are the perceptions of teachers?
 - c. What are the perceptions of administrators?
2. What are the perceptions of key stakeholders in regards to the school-wide positive behavior support system (SWPBS) as an intervention for (ISS) referral reduction?
3. What are the perceptions of the key stakeholders in regards to academic curricular components necessary to include in an ISS program?

4. Do the perceptions of the (ISS) process and placement of students among different key stakeholders differ and if so, how?

Participants Involved

Table 1. Parent Participants

Parent Participant Name	# of Students at Caden:	Ethnicity	Years enrolled in Caden Middle School
Ms. Phelicity Phoversity	2	Hispanic	7 years
Mrs. Rosa X	9	African-American	15 years
Mrs. Felicia Acres-Mule	1	African-American	2 years

Table 2. Teacher Participants

Teacher	Age	Ethnicity	Certification	Teaching Experience	Yrs at: CMS	# of Disc. Referrals
Mr. Matt Inewknow	28	European-American	Generalist 4-8	4 years	1 year	3
Ms. Gertrude Cash	31	African-American	English Lang. Arts & Reading (4-8)	9yrs	6yrs	25
Mr. Chadwick Freespeak	41	European-American	English Lang. Arts & Reading (4-8)	8yrs	4yrs	2
Ms. Condinono Rice	34	African-American	All Levels-Art (PK-12) Technology Applications (EC-12)	15yrs	7yrs	56
Mrs. Tara Founder	54	African-American	Secondary Geography (6-12) Secondary Spanish (6-12)	20yrs	10yrs	27
Ms. Genny Switchboard	30	African-American	English Lang. Arts & Reading (4-8) Principal (EC-12)	9 yrs	9yrs	52
Mrs. Nomo Tran-Ning	35	Hispanic specifically Mexican American	Generalist (EC-4) Mathematics (4-8)	7 yrs	5 yrs	46

Table 3. Administrative Participants

Administrator	Age:	Ethnicity	Certification	Teaching Experience	Admin. Exp.	Yrs @ CMS	Title
Dr. Kathleen Janeway Admin No. 1	52	African-American	Superintendency Principal (EC-12) Social Studies (8-12)	15yrs	10yrs	1yrs	Principal
Mr. Alfred Buddy Admin No. 2	39	European-American	Principal (EC-12) Secondary Basic Business (6-12)	9yrs	3yrs	4yrs	Assistant Principal

Twelve participants were asked to participate based on their willingness to volunteer and participate, their relationship to Caden Middle School students (i.e. parent, or educator). Information was provided to the research site by the district sponsor who for this particular study was my campus principal. All participants were asked to volunteer through a district generated informational letter pertaining to the study, and an endorsement by the campus principal. All data collection steps were implemented according to the rules and policies as outlined by the Bring-Together Independent School District. The attached recruitment letter was approved and authorized by the BTISD, and utilized with all potential participants. Once the participants agreed to volunteer, they were asked to sign a consent form which is attached with this application, and placed into the principal investigators box at the research site. Although the middle school studied is an actual campus, pseudonyms will be used for the school and district. The district shall be known as Bring-Together ISD and the school as Caden Middle School.

Purposeful Sampling (Creswell, 2007) was used in this case study (Stake, 1995 as cited in Creswell, 2007). Fourteen human subjects were asked to volunteer as

participants. Participants were asked to volunteer based on their involvement in the educational process at Caden Middle School. This study will be open to all teachers, parents, and administrators that have access to this particular campus. If more than the required number of subjects volunteer, then preference will go to the teachers and parents that are involved with the 8th grade class. Two administrators, 7 teachers, and 3 parents were asked to voluntarily participate in this problem of practice. Through purposeful sampling interviews took place during the fall semester of 2011, during the month of October, 2011. No student records were accessed or utilized at any time during the interview process. Administrators, Teachers, and Parents will be asked to volunteer based on their experience with the campus itself, and or the understanding of the Positive Behavior Support System.

The administrators, parents were referred to by title and teachers will be assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities. All collected data as well as the artifacts that hold such data, such as file folders, journals, portable hard drives, and the laptop itself, was stored in the office of Dr. Gwen Webb-Hasan faculty chair of the PI, on the campus of Texas A&M University. In addition pseudonyms will be used for each participant i.e. (teacher a, teacher b, Administrator 1, and etc...). Participants' were assured that their names would never be divulged or associated with the findings in any way. All information obtained will be kept confidential and incorporated into data. The information obtained in this study may be published in academic journals or presented at conferences, but the participants' identity will be kept strictly confidential.

Procedures

Campus data from public domains such as Academic Excellence Indicator System, and The Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS) data reflected a three-year pattern is indicative of an over-representation of students of color, primarily for this African American student in the in-school suspension setting. The purpose of this problem of practice is to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents in regards to the implementation of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) systems in the in-school suspension (ISS) as a reduction method for future ISS placements... Participants were selected to be a possible participant because they were parent or an educator at Caden Middle School. Selection preference will go to participants whom teach or work with middle school grade students due to the public discipline displayed in AEIS data or PBMAS discipline data. Two administrators, seven teachers, and five parents will be asked to voluntarily participate in this problem of practice. Through purposeful sampling interviews will take place during the second semester during the month of October, and in late November or early December.

During the interviews, teachers, parents, and administrators will be asked about their perceptions (what they think) about the positive behavior support interventions that were put in place in the campus ISS program. This study is being sponsored by the principal investigator Robert L. Long, III. Participants that agree, and sign consent will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview, which participants will be asked a series of questions related to personal demographics, understanding of the positive

behavior support system and their experience with school personnel and assignments to in-school suspension.

This study took one interview, which was conducted over a time period from 30-45 minutes to an hour. This study was not video-taped or audio-taped. All answers to interview questions were hand-recorded by the principal investigator and transcribed by the principal investigator. Participants were not audio or video recorded. Interviews were arranged at the time of the participants' convenience, or after-work in the setting of their choice. Participants were asked to submit a signed copy of the consent form as an acknowledgement to their participation in this study. Participants were asked to participant in one interview session, and then another session for member-checking and data reliability purposes.

Participants were asked to provide demographic and contact information for them only. Participants were asked about their knowledge of SWPBS and the In-school suspension system on the current campus. Participants were asked to participant in the trustworthiness and reliability phase of the study by reviewing PI notes and interview transcripts transcribed by the PI during the interview. Each interview is anticipated to last approximately 45-60 minutes. All collected data as well as the artifacts that hold such data, such as file folders, journals, portable hard drives, and the laptop itself, were stored in the office of Dr. Gwen Webb-Hasan faculty chair of the PI, on the campus of Texas A&M University. Participants' names were never divulged or associated with the findings in any way. All information obtained was kept confidential and incorporated into data. The information obtained in this study may be published in academic journals

or presented at conferences, but the participants' identity will be kept strictly confidential. This information and data will be stored for 5 years.

Data Collection

This case study implemented the use of participant interviews. Student achievement data, discipline data, and historical records were examined and analyzed to make comparisons to establish differences and/or changes in discipline data. A qualitative research strategy was used to analyze data through extensive review of field notes from document analysis and interviews (Boyatzis, 1998, Creswell, 2007). A constant comparative method of coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was employed to continually compare segments of data within and across categories until definite categories emerge from the participant interviews and focus group.

The results of the research findings were shared with the teacher participants as well as with the principal at the end of the study in order to inform future practices. Analysis of all collected data began in October of 2011, and continued throughout the month of November 2011. The coding process will consist of reviewing all historical documents, interviews, interventions, and observational records to develop patterns and themes. Participation by teachers, parents, and administrators is voluntary and they can opt out of participation in the study at any time. At the completion of this process the results and discussion sections were written in preparation for the anticipated defense in late December, 2011 or early January, 2012.

Data Analysis

Boyatzis (1998) described thematic analysis as the process to be used with qualitative information for encoding the data. This may be a list of themes which form a pattern found in the information that describes and organizes the possible observations and interprets aspects of the phenomena (Boyatzis, 1998). In this case study I selected the use of themes as the process to analyze the data obtained through semi structured interviews. The purpose for interviews and member-checking exercises was to provide participants with a voice in the planning of the curriculum for an in-school suspension program. This was important because teachers and support staff needed to know that their input will help in developing and implementing curriculum for an in-school suspension program.

The interpretational analysis process selected for this case study is based on Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative approach to analysis. The constant comparative method is concerned with generating many categories or properties about general problems. Some of these properties may be causes, conditions, or consequences. This method, instead of consideration of all available data, requires saturation of data (1967). This process involves: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory.

Huberman and Miles (1994) suggested that investigators make preliminary counts of data codes and determine how frequently codes appear in the database. Once the field notes were gathered and the interviews transcribed, the first step was to

examine the data and code it into as many categories of analysis as possible while comparing incidents applicable to each category. I created a spreadsheet to facilitate the task and organize the themes.

According to Glaser and Strauss' (1967) method, the second step is the integration of categories and their properties. In this step the coding continued and the constant comparative units changed from comparison of incident with incident to comparison of incident with properties of the category that resulted from the initial comparison of incidents (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I identified the properties to each category and further compared them with the initial comparison of themes. Step three of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) process is to delimit the theory. As the themes or categories emerged I compared them to those in the existing review of the literature and to prior research and theory. This constant comparison of the themes and sub themes resulted in the theoretical properties of the categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The last step in Glaser and Strauss' (1967) analytical process is writing theory. Upon completion of the second step the integration and reduction of categories resulted in three themes: (a) school factors, (b) home factors, and (c) adult communication contributing to the stakeholders' decision-making process related to SWPBS interventions and placement in the in-school suspension program or DMC. Further analysis, merging, and reduction of themes yielded sub themes within each theme. Further discussion of the themes and their relation to existing literature and theory will be explored in chapter five of this study.

Text analysis, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), provides a method to address each research question by making sense or understanding the abstract

phenomena. The researcher is able to generate themes surrounding the actions, interactions, and perceptions of people (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The data from the field emerges as a “set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship, which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena”, Glaser and Strauss (1967).

The method of the study was a from a belief system that lived experience can be understood from the viewpoints of those who live it--that people's realities are not physical objects that lend themselves to objective observations, but constructions of the mind based on lived experiences that can be understood within the contexts of people's lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Seidman, 1998). Also, this view values and upholds the importance of interactions between participants and researchers in reconstructing lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Context analysis also advocates and supports a naturalistic approach to understanding complex human experiences (Creswell, 2002). The naturalistic approach in qualitative research focuses on finding meaning in the environment where the phenomenon of interest occurs. It also requires the use of analysis methodology and study instruments that are sensitive to the underlying phenomenon of interest (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1998).

The researcher followed and completed the required university procedures for conducting this study. The university Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviews all studies before permission is granted to initiate the study. Since the study involved human subjects the appropriate IRB and informed consent procedures were followed for ethical and legal reasons. The IRB granted approval to conduct the study.

The research method that best met the goals of the study, and was appropriate to investigate the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Implementation as it Relates to Referral Reduction among Students of Color in an In-school Suspension Program: Perceptions of Key Stakeholders.

Data collection was completed mainly through in-depth interviews that were transcribed on a notepad by the principal investigator. Marshall and Rossman (1995) clarified this method and its scope of uses as a data collection method relied on quite extensively by qualitative researchers. Marshall and Rossman (1995) further clarified by describing it as a conversation with a purpose and state that in-depth interviewing may be the overall strategy or one of several methods employed in a study. This method required the researcher to use open-ended questions to explore a phenomenon of interest, and build on participants' responses to explore the phenomenon.

The ultimate goal of in-depth interviewing was to have participants reconstruct their experiences within the topic under investigation (Seidman, 1998). The appropriateness of in-depth phenomenological interviewing for investigating the research questions that guided the study prompted its use as a methodology. Researchers using text analysis approach may rely heavily on interviews as a method of data collection (Charmaz, 2000). Interviews are used as a way to capture the experiences and perceptions of participants in their own words (Charmaz, 2000). Interviewing was the method of collecting data for this study. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews with open-ended questions were used to give the key participants options for responding without constraint. To promote a safe atmosphere interviews were conducted at a place

determined by the interviewee, which included different locations at a school that contained a private conference room. Kvale (1996) described a research interview as an experience between two people about a topic of shared interest. It is an explicit form of personal interaction in which knowledge evolves through dialogue.

The procedures for text analysis involve three types of coding procedures: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 2002). Open coding consists of taking the data and segmenting them into categories of information (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The next step in the process is to reassemble the data in new ways using the axial coding process. Creswell (2002) describes axial coding as an arrangement using a coding paradigm or logic diagram in which the researcher identifies a central phenomenon, explores causal conditions, specifies strategies, identifies the context and intervening conditions and delineates the consequences. The third set of coding procedures in the process is called selective coding. During the selective coding process, the researcher composes themes from the interrelationship of the categories in the axial coding model. At a fundamental level, these themes offer an abstract explanation for the process being studied in the research (Creswell, 2002). Field notes were taken during the interview and key artifacts were obtained. The field notes and key artifacts provided additional validation to various themes. Examples of key artifacts are as follows: Meeting agendas, instructional data, discipline data, attendance and demographical trends relating to BTISD and Caden Middle School. Finally, selective coding allowed a central phenomenon to emerge. Each theme surrounds a core or central category that fuses or grounds the data together. These themes are the groundwork toward developing a theory

by providing a means by which a theory can be integrated (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The findings from this study are viewed as groundwork for further studies.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a procedure used by qualitative researchers to explore or study an issue. In any study, there are concerns of threats to verification and trustworthiness. Triangulation is also a way to look at consistency in the data. In this study, the triangulation of methodology used consisted of key stakeholder interviews, interview notation transcriptions, field notes, and key artifacts. The interview transcriptions included multiple perspectives from the different key stakeholders. The field notes were completed following each interview and included the researcher's observations and personal notes. All interview transcriptions were typed, and then re-typed by a transcriber. The key artifacts emerged from reviewing instructional and discipline data, communication between the key stakeholders, and items key-stakeholders brought to the researcher's attention. The researcher developed a narrative that summarizes the findings that emerged during the analysis process which is included in the next chapter.

Data Analysis Procedures

Creswell (1994) stated, "Data analysis requires that the researcher be comfortable with developing categories and making comparisons and contrasts" Yin (1994). This is also in keeping with Yin's (1994) view. "With triangulation, the potential problems of construct validity also can be addressed, because the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon" Yin (1994).

The purpose for interviews and focus groups was to provide participants with a voice in the planning of the curriculum for an in-school suspension program. This was important because teachers and support staff needed to know that their input will help in developing and implementing curriculum for an in-school suspension program. Measor and Sikes (1992) stated that frequent dialogue “involves developing relationships and trust and penetrating several layers of access”. Because this was a qualitative research study, the coding techniques were very important to the study. The coding techniques used in this study were: open coding and selective coding. Selective coding is “the process of integrating and refining the theory. In integration, categories are organized around a central explanatory concept. The theory is validated by comparing raw data or by presenting it to respondents for their reactions” Strauss & Corbin, (1998).

Validity

Schwandt (2007) stated that validity in qualitative research is the claim made about the meaning of dependable evidence and the methods used to assemble such evidence. Creswell (2007) defined validity as the accuracy of the account using one or more of the procedures for validation, such as member checking, triangulating sources of data, or using peer or external auditors of the accounts. As a researcher, I relied on triangulation, peer debriefing, and rich, thick description as methods of validity to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the findings and discussions resulting from my research.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The study was limited to a small suburban middle school. Because of the researcher's professional experience in the district and the action-oriented nature of the study, the research might be biased. It was difficult to pilot the instruments due to the nature of the action research. The experience of this urban middle school in a suburban school district might not typify the experiences of other middle schools. Hence, the research might present a generalized limitation beyond the scope of the small sample size. In fact, by design, a case study (Yin, 1994) and action research (Stringer, 2004) are more suitable for generalizing to theoretical propositions as opposed to other populations. Summary of this chapter presented the research design and methodology which were developed to identify teachers' and support staff's perceptions of ISS from an academic, punitive, and therapeutic viewpoint.

The data for the study were collected through multiple data sources and analyzed to provide a picture of the beliefs of teachers and support staff. The three-part research data collection design included teacher and support staff interviews, focus group discussions, and a review of planning documents. The collection and analysis of data from this chapter were presented along with the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in Chapters Four and Five.

Ethics

This study met the standards of the Human Subjects Protection Program and qualified as "exempt" under the Institutional Review Board provisions of the Office of Research Compliance at Texas A&M University (see Appendix 5).

There are national standards that address ethics for school leaders. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) addressed the area of ethics in the area of decision-making, administrative practices, confidentiality and integrity (Owens & Valesky, 2007). The Texas Administrative Code of the Texas Education Agency (1998) gave a clear outline the ethics of educators. As an educator, I was bound by those rules and followed them throughout the study period.

Although the middle school studied was an actual campus, pseudonyms were used for the school and district. The principal was referred to as both title and pseudonym, and teachers were assigned pseudonyms. My role as the researcher was important to this study as I was an administrator at the school. The problem is a real one concerning all those involved. Throughout the year I participated in achievement planning as a part of my professional responsibilities to the school. The results and recommendations from this study will affect my professional work well after the completion of the project.

Summary

I offered in Chapter III a discussion about the qualitative paradigm, specifically of case study, and its relevant application to educational research. I introduced the discussion of methods by sharing my role as a researcher. I provided an outline of the qualitative methodology I used in this study for the purposeful selection of informants, data collection, and data analysis. I also reviewed the strategies used in this study to ensure trustworthiness of the methodology and validity of the findings. In the last section of this chapter, I concluded with a brief discussion of anticipated ethical issues.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Findings

The purpose of this problem of practice was to examine the perceptions of key stakeholders of Caden Middle School as it related to the repeated placement of students of color in in-school suspension settings and the perception of positive behavior support working to reduce this pattern among students. This chapter introduces data from the parents, teachers, and administrators who are a part of the Caden Middle School community. These key stakeholders are the key decision-makers in regards to access to educational opportunities. One-on-one interviews were conducted with participants who shared their perceptions and experiences in working with both the positive behavior intervention and supports system and in-school suspension. The interviews generated 5 working themes: 1) Engaging Relationships Lacking, 2) Little Comprehensive Understanding of PBIS, 3) “Frequent Flyers” Suspended from Learning, 4) Not enough Professional Development, and 5) Low Academic Expectations of ISS.

The first theme, Engagement of Lacking Relationships, refers to the participants perceptions whether positive or negative of the school itself. This theme describes how the school itself was being perceived or received. It also gave you a clear indication if stakeholders felt like the school was providing and free and appropriate level for either their particular student, or to the students they serve. Most comments zeroed in on diminished relationships within the school during interactions and low expectations for

ISS. The next theme that emerged from the data was the theme titled: Little Comprehensive Understanding of PBIS Support system itself at Caden Middle School. These key stakeholders over all had little no understanding of PBIS. This theme describes how participants understood, or misunderstood, the philosophy of PBIS, and how that “looks like, feels like, and sounds like” at Caden Middle School. The two subthemes that emerged from this data were: a) little understanding of the philosophy behind PBIS, b) little understanding of the expected outcome of PBIS upon implementation. The third theme that surfaced through the data analysis process identified as: “Frequent Flyers” Suspended from Learning. With this theme, we examined how participants experienced this process and how the process itself, impacted the parents, teachers, and administrators’ perception of the school itself. Overwhelmingly stakeholders concluded that “frequent flyers” were suspended form learning each and every time they were placed in the ISS program at Caden Middle School Five subthemes emerged in the data analysis and the triangulation process during the member-checking phase.

The first of which is the understanding of placement in the in-school suspension program. Followed by examining the perceptions of consequences that led to in-school suspension placement, this in turn takes us to the fourth theme, Communication about the placement, whether it is to the teacher, and or parent. Behavioral changes that result after the placement is the fifth and final subtheme that was examined through the lens of the prescribed methodology for this problem of practice. The theme titled: Not enough Professional Development was the fourth to emerge providing participants with “in

many cases” an “eyebrow” lift as they grasped to understand the role that staff development currently played in their understanding of both In-school suspension and Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports. The fifth theme that surfaced during this journey was identified as: Low Academic Expectations of ISS. Taking the perceptions of the participants and the academic expectations that were placed in the in-school suspension program, and understanding of that expectation was different than in the regular classroom setting? If it was, was it meant to be different, and if so, is that a contributor to the “incomplete success” that Caden Middle School is currently experiencing with its students of color? Before the findings are outlined and reviewed, I feel it is essential to communicate the context of the school, Caden itself, and key stakeholders or participants. Therefore, I will describe the school, Caden Middle School and its community, and history to give perspective to the participants’ perceptions and experiences while educating children in the culture of Caden Middle School. In addition, I will include other relevant information that will enhance the participants’ account of schooling in Caden.

Caden Middle School

Caden Middle School is a secondary school serving students in the sixth, seventh and eighth grade levels. The campus opened in 1978 as a predominately European American campus, which reflected the overall demographics of the Bring-Together Independent School District (BTISD). As demographics began to shift in BTISD, Caden Middle School became one of the first campuses in the district to experience the

clientele shift from being a predominately European American campus to a campus that most of the African American and Hispanic students in the district attended.

Today, Caden Middle School is a suburban middle school in a still suburban district with an urban population in regards to student population. According to the student demographic data from BTISD, Caden Middle School services a total of 1,226 students. The campus demographics are as follows: 538 Hispanics, 345 African Americans, 208 European Americans, 135 Asian Americans, and 30 multi-racial students. According to the Texas Education Agency's 2009–2010 Academic Excellence Indicator System School Report Card for Caden Middle School, the student demographics broken down into percentages were as follows: 42.9% Latino or Hispanic, 23% African American, 20.9% European American, 12.7% Asian, and 0.4% Native Americans in the student population (see Figure 1). The organizational health of the faculty and staff is currently in recovery, from what Martin Chemer regards as “organizational trauma.” The campus principal since 2006—an African American male who was out of the building due to illness last year—caused a disruption in leadership that impacted the organizational goals as well as hindered the continued implementation and benchmarking of the school-wide positive behavioral support (SWPBS) initiative pushed by the district. The campus was placed in charge of a first-year administrator who was not equipped to carry the behavioral, political, cultural, nor the academic demands of such a diverse campus.

This disruption was compounded when the district placed a female European American interim principal although experienced focused her energies on school-wide

discipline management through the means of carrying out consequences that reflected the ideals of zero tolerance policies. According to conversations with members of the faculty and staff, this interim principal focused on “locking down” the students through “tardy-sweeps”, “automatic suspension”, and mandatory DMC placements without consideration of preventive systems... Another issue that created barriers and obstacles in regard to effective implementation and sustainment of the SWPBS system is that the building was undergoing a massive construction re-model to increase and update classrooms while making the campus aesthetically comparable to other BTISD schools.

In late August, the BTISD appointed a young African American female to the post as principal for the 2010–2011 academic school years. The district charged her with several objectives—one of them being the complete integration of school-wide positive behavior support systems (SWPBS) into the established culture of the organizational climate. Shortly, after taking the helm of Caden Middle School, the newest principal had to start her first year as principal delivering sad news to her disconnected staff: The former principal, the African American male, lost his battle with his illness, sending ripples of trauma throughout the organization. This trauma was continued in the 2011–2012 school year when the school did not meet the national qualifications for achievement for African-American students in the subject area of mathematics labeling this school as a campus that did not meet AYP or Adequate Yearly Progress for the 2010–2011 school years. According to the principals goal-setting form for 2011–2012 one of her major areas to focus on was better communication to the staff, and working

to be as transparent as possible, it was her hope that this practice would work to diminish the organizational distrust of administration.

Research Time Line

When this project began in October of 2010, I had just come aboard as the newest addition to the administrative team at Caden Middle School. Serving as the Assistant Principal Curriculum and Instruction for the last four years in my past posting, I was specifically asked to serve as the Lead Assistant Principal due to my prior knowledge and background in a nearby urban district. My charge was to “re-vamp” the in-school suspension program or DMC. In addition I was to become responsible for the School-Wide Positive behavior support system or PBIS system, and get the campus back on track in regards to district expectations for a campus in its fourth year of implementation. From October 2010 until April, 2011 I worked and met with the PBIS Level I committee, to re-establish and provide professional development to “refresh” teachers on the tenants and purpose of PBIS.

The committee revised its goals to not focus on fundraising which had consumed 90% of the past meeting agendas, and to focus on staff and student interventions that would promote a school climate and culture that supported the teaches of positive interactions, and allowing students to learn to self-correct. This was a daunting task as I always received push back from some of the veteran teachers that had been in the building for several years and wanted more punitive consequences that if promoted often placed students on what some researchers call “the pipeline to prison”. July of 2011 found Caden Middle School meeting the criteria to move to Level II of PBIS, which

meant that we had satisfied the district requirements. PBIS Level II involved a committee of 8 teachers from all representing a different subject, grade, and activity.

This training was the first time that teachers had the opportunity to spend two days just evaluating and reviewing discipline data and identifying trends in our data. The committee, with a district guide as their coach identified possible PBIS supported interventions to recommend to the Level I committee for campus-wide implementation. The students that had many referrals were also identified by the PBIS Level II committee who then placed them on an “intervention plan” which entailed a teacher-led parent/teacher conference highlighting the students past disciplinary and academic issues, and presented the parents with a plan. In addition the instructional master schedule was modified to allow the members of the PBIS Level II committee to have a “free” period during advisory to tutor and observe that 3-5% of students whom had repeated discipline referrals.

In early August of 2011, the Principal approved two PBIS implementation days requiring both Level I and Level II committees to meet, review the data, and plan for school-wide and classroom procedures, policies, and interventions for students and adults. This previously had never been done at Caden Middle School. During the two-day teachers developed staff development for the once they returned in late August.

Discipline Management Class (DMC)

At Caden Middle School the Discipline Management Class or ISS program prior to October of 2011 had been a place where students were simply placed, without any interaction with adults or certified support staff. Deaf students as well as students with

special needs had been placed in the in-school suspension setting without an interpreter or certified staff members to deliver instructional modifications as deemed by each student's individualized education plan. The adult that manages this classroom has been in the building for 19 years. She has served as the DMC coordinator. The "DMC Lady" as the students refer to her is not a certified teacher but a para-professional, she lack's many of the skills necessary to be an effective manager of the discipline and instructional needs of students. Because I appraise her job performance I did not ask her to participate in the interviews.

After spending the first month collecting data from discipline data, and discipline logs from DMC, I met with district officials to ascertain the expectations that the district, principal, and PBIS wanted from a program such as this. From the series of meetings at the district level it was discovered that my long-time DMC Coordinator had not attended any professional development for the DMC program in two years. Furthermore, she had lost or misplaced the entire district curriculum regarding the operation and functioning for the DMC program. Once confronted about the materials the paraprofessional stated that she had left the materials in the DMC room over the summer and someone had come and taken her curriculum. However, she chose not to alert an administrator of the missing curriculum because she felt that she could perform her duties with aide from a "binder of paperwork".

In January and February of 2011, the campus principal, the DMC coordinator and I all toured DMC programs across the district. These campuses were selected by district representatives who identified these campuses as having total alignment of

district expectations of their in-school suspension programs. In July and August of 2011, I along with the DMC Coordinator began to attend professional development sessions together to better map out the implementation plan for DMC. The “DMC Lady” also met with the PBIS Level II team to collaborate on initiatives and ideas regarding to PBIS and implementation into DMC. A number of interventions were put in place including the “Ripple Effects” software. This software became a staple in the In-school suspension program with every student completing two lessons a day depending on their discipline infraction.

While we are still working on issues regarding student work being delivered to the DMC room on a daily and consistent basis as well as, convincing teachers, instructional and support staff to visit DMC daily to provide instruction. Today, every student that enters the DMC classroom receives a behavioral contract that tracks student success both academically and behavioral daily. These contracts are taken up at the end of every day and placed in a file folder for data collection purposes. As of January 2011 I implemented a policy that prescribed students to meet 90% of both their behavioral and academic expectations earned the opportunity for early release right before the last two periods of the day. As a result, they are allowed to return to their general education classrooms. This practice is aligned with SWPBS interventions in reference to providing students with an instant positive intervention for correcting a negative behavior. This incentive also gives students the opportunity earns something positive giving them a reason to change their behavior even if it is for the short-term. The instructional piece is the missing part of the puzzle regarding DMC. Many of the students do not receive any

classwork, and when they do it is more punitive “tons of worksheets” instead of something that is instructive.

Participants

Originally, a purposeful sample approach was going to be instituted until the BTISD district research department’s guidelines for participant recruitment and selection was instituted. District guidelines only allowed me to utilize one means of recruitment and that was through a district approved letter. From that letter potential participants would have to contact me in person. I could not approach them, or speak with them about the study. As a result stakeholders volunteered to participate. The participants or key stakeholders consisted of two administrators: Kathleen Janeway, and Alfred Buddy. There were seven teachers that volunteered for this body of research: Matt Inewknow, Gertrude Cash, Chadwick Freespeak, Condinono Rice, Tara Founder, Genny Switchboard, and Nomo Tran-Ning. Three parents participated in this problem of practice, Phelicity Phoversity, Rosa X, and Felicia Acres-Mule. Below is a description of each participant. Each description is a biased description based on the observations, interviews, meeting records, data, and conversations collected by the principal investigator.

Parent Participants

Phelicity Phoversity

A 56 year old Hispanic or Mexican American Parent at Caden Middle School parent and volunteer. She has had two boys attend Caden middle school one current 9th grade student at the feeder high school and the other an 7th grade student at Caden

Middle School. She has been involved at Caden for the past 5 years on this campus with both of her boys. She has had a great experience at Caden with her boys, as they have never been in trouble or received discipline consequences for negative behavior.

However, both boys were in the gifted & talented program at Caden and are tracked accordingly. This parent was kind and very gentle, I can remember thinking what a “glass is half full”, wonderful lady. During the interview I got the impression that this Ms. Phoversity, didn’t necessarily understand that I was asking her, but answered the questions anyway to the best of her understanding. After the interview was over she made a comment that “we need all the positive information about Caden out there so that people will see that this is a good neighbor and would quit moving out”.

Rosa X

A 54 year old African-American mother of 9 kids, all of which attended Caden Middle school over the course of 15 years. This mother currently has a 7th and 8th grade boys attending Caden Middle School. Both boys are serviced under the Special Education Umbrella one for Autism, and the other for Asperger’s. Rosa X for years was a stay at home mother whom volunteered for years supporting the campuses athletic department. However, when the African-American male principal came aboard he hired Rosa X as the an administrative secretary, it was in that role that she began to receive insider information about how her sons were being treated under past administrative policy. Upon the arrival of Dr. Janeway and me, began to observe the negative treatment towards Rosa X often times resulting in practices that could be perceived as unfair treatment towards her children by other administrators. As a professional this

parent goes above and beyond for the school often working concession stands for athletic events, catering special luncheons for staff, as well as staying late many nights assisting Dr. Janeway with projects to better the student body. With all of this hard work and dedication Rosa X is often perceived by staff-members that have been at Caden Middle School as “above her station”. Rosa X, during the interview was eager to share but, made sure that we met off-campus so that there would not be any “ears” as she put it. This participant actually provided me with more insight during the member-checking phase of the research by notating and making corrections and clarifications all over her transcript, and research notes.

Felicia Acres-Mule

This 38 year old African-American female was displaced from New Orleans following hurricane Katrina. She now is a bus-driver for a neighboring school district and has two boys in the Bring-Together Independent School District. Her oldest son is hearing and attends a high-school in a different feeding school then that of her youngest. Her youngest son due to his hearing-impairment as a child that is deaf, has to be served at Caden Middle School due to the fact that the a deaf education program is housed at this campus. This program serves 6 of the surrounding school districts that have students that are deaf and or hearing impaired. Mrs. Acres-Mule came to Bring-Together ISD with the hopes that her child would receive all of the accommodations, interventions, and supports that would assist her child in attainment of the American Dream. She has been involved with Caden Middle School for 3 years and classifies herself as American above being African-American. During the interview, Mrs. Acres-

Mule was very forth-coming, open, and frustrated. When asked about her ethnicity she began to say African-American but, stopped in mid phrase and said abruptly:

“American, I am an American”.

Teacher Participants

Matt Inewknow

A 28 year old male European-American 7th Grade Texas History Teacher at Caden Middle School. The 2011-2012 school year are his first year at Caden Middle School and in the Bring-Together Independent School District. Matt’s prior teaching experience was in an Urban district that neighbor’s Bring-Together ISD. There he taught for 4 years prior to his move to Caden Middle School. Since his arrival at Caden Middle School, Matt has the lowest discipline referral rate in the building. Yet, he has some of the largest class sizes that include full inclusion of students with identified with special needs, and deaf students in his classroom. In addition, his district accountability testing scores are some of the highest, especially among his students of color. During our interview this Mr. Inewnow was visibility nervous, often asking me to repeat questions; He made sure that his classroom door was closed prior to beginning our interview session. He was the first to submit his consent form during this process.

Gertrude Cash

A 31 year old African-American Female 6th/7th/8th Grade Reading and Dyslexia Specialist for the campus. Gertrude generally has a great rapport with most of her students. She sponsors the campus step-team, and considers herself to be a positive role model for African-American females. However, in regards to her discipline data, her

referral rate is fluctuates according to the expectation of the sending administrator. If an administrator has high expectations regarding criteria meeting level II and III infractions then she typically sends less referrals to that administrator. Gertrude Cash has been in the field of education for nine years at Caden Middle School. During our interview Ms. Cash felt it important to establish that she had the answer to whatever “question” I was investigating at Caden. Stating:

Ms. Cash: “Let me know if you would like me to answer it a different way, I am sure I know the right answer”.

I would always reassure her that there was no right or wrong answer and that I was there to just collect her perceptions. It was all about the new principal and how she was going to “fail, because she didn’t support teachers, and that I would be with her if I did not get on board”.

Chadwick Freespeak

A 41 year old European-American 8th Grade Reading teacher at Caden Middle School. Chadwick has been a teacher for eight years in the Bring-Together with 4 of those years at Caden Middle School. His former middle school in the district is the lowest performing middle school with highest population of students of color. Mr. Freespeak serves the most at-risk students in the building yet, has the fewest referrals in the building. In observations of Mr. Freespeak in the classrooms and in the corridors of the school building this participant-observed witnessed the “positive” relationships and rapport that Mr. Freespeak seem to have with all of this students. His actions seemed to be genuine and students responded positively to him 90% of the time. During Mr.

Freespeak's interview, as well as the member-checking he provided me with a wealth of information that at times felt like a confessional of not only decisions that he had made in the past with other students in regards to discipline matters but, conversations and volatile meetings that he had engaged in with other colleagues about the very matter.

Condinono Rice

A 43 year old African-American 6th/7th/8th Grade Art Teacher at Caden Middle School. She has been in education for 15 years with 7 of those years at Caden Middle School. She is currently working on her Principal certification in a graduate program at a neighboring historically Black university. This teacher has some of the highest referral rates in the building at Caden Middle School. The majority of her referrals are for African-American and Hispanic or Latino male students. She often gets involved in verbal yelling matches with students that on three occasions were so disruptive that administration was called to intervene. Ms. Rice waited until two weeks after the initial mail-out to drop her consent form in my box, during the interview she seemed restless, after every question she took her scratch pad and pen and seemed to draw a line through something that was written on the composition notebook. I did not have the opportunity to inquiry about the reason for this behavior but still she was polite and provided me with great data.

Tara Founder

A 54 year old African-American female 8th Grade Spanish teacher at Caden Middle School. Having 20 years of experience at Caden Middle School she is the senior faculty member at CMS. She is known as one of the "originals" in terms of teacher

tenure. This designation is highly respected among the teacher culture at Caden Middle School. Currently there are 4 “originals” left meaning they staff members that have spent the most time at Caden Middle School. Mrs. Founder, in the 2010-2011 school year had a high discipline referral rate, however with training this summer, and her involvement on the PBIS level II committee this teacher has reduced her referral rate in the 2011-2012 by 65% in a yearly comparison from October 2010-October 2011. During our interview Mrs. Founder was very candid and frank with me about her past failures as a classroom teacher in regards to discipline and classroom management. She went further talking about how the PBIS Level II training had “changed her perspective” on what our purpose is as educators in regards to building relationships with students.

Genny Switchboard

A 30 year old African-American female 8th Grade Language Arts Teacher at Caden Middle School with nine years of teaching experience all of which has been at Caden Middle School she is known to be the “key communicator” of all that instructional leaders would perceive as “negative propaganda”. In my dealings at the district level and in having informal conversations with other administrators and teachers many of them have referenced Ms. Switchboard as a source of “tabloid” type conversations from Caden Middle School. Although she sponsors the boys step team and is a member of the PBIS level I committee her actions and comments often reflect a teacher that is not vested in her students. During one of my initial observations in her classrooms for data collection purposes, she confronted me, stating “I don’t need you in my classroom observing me; I need you in your office suspending students that I put out

of the classroom. So get out of here and do your job”. Her discipline referral rates are among the highest in the building and yet her personal attendance is questionable Fridays, as that is the day that she is commonly absent. According to archival records collected in the 2010-2011 school year this particular participant missed 16 total days of instruction all of the days were either Monday’s or Friday’s. During the interview, this teacher seemed to make it clear to me, that she was glad that I was open-minded enough to have selected her as a participant. During this conversation she informed me that it was wise for me to talk to her to get the “low-down” of what’s going on around campus.

Nomo Tran-Ning

A 35 year old Hispanic or Mexican American Teacher at Caden Middle School. She is currently a 6th grade Math Teacher at Caden Middle School. Mrs. Tran-Ning has been teaching for seven years with five of those years served at Caden Middle School. In regards to discipline referrals in the 2010-2011 school years she wrote 67 discipline referrals with 62 of them being students of color. In the 2011-2012 school years she has significantly reduced the number of discipline referrals. Since August she has only submitted 6 discipline referrals. During the interview, and member-checking process Mrs. Tran-Ning, was very quiet and very polite. As we progressed through the interview I got the feeling that some of the questions were eliciting some thought-provoking realizations.

Administrator Participants

Kathleen Janeway

Having a total of 21 years in education Dr. Kathleen Janeway is a 52 year old female African-American Administrator at Caden Middle School. In the 2011-2012 school year she is in her second year as Principal of Caden Middle School. Dr. Janeway, having recently acquired her ED.D from a local Texas university was awarded her appointment as Principal of Caden Middle School in late August of the 2010 school year. The former principal of CMS was an African-American male who had been an “absentee leader” for the previous nine-months due to personal illness that ultimately took his life during the 3rd week of Dr. Janeway’s tenure at Caden. In Dr. Janeway’s prior assignment she served as the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction at another district middle school. The clientele served at her previous middle school that was middle to upper class in terms of economics. She served in this role for four years prior to her promotion. Before becoming an administrator in Bring-Together ISD, Dr. Janeway also served as an Assistant Principal in a neighboring suburban district in the Houston area. Most of Dr. Janeway’s educational experience was served in the state of California where she was both a teacher and administrator prior to moving to Texas. Dr. Janeway came to Caden Middle School with high expectations for teachers and students. My interview with Dr. Janeway took place after 7pm on a week night, as her days are very full attempting to manage a campus of nearly 1400 students. She was very attentive, warm, and honest about where the campus was, and where she needed them to

be in regards to working with and all educating children. Member-checking was also completed in a follow-up meeting to ensure that her voice was captured.

Alfred Buddy

A 39 year old male European-American Administrator at Caden Middle School. This individual has been at Caden Middle School for a total of 9 years serving as both a teacher, and then an administrator. He has a total of 14 years of experience with most of those being in the Bring-Together ISD. He is currently an Assistant Principal at Caden Middle and has served in that capacity for 3 years, with the 2011-2012 school years being the 3rd year. Although Mr. Buddy does not consider himself as a novice or rookie administrator many district leaders, as well as campus personnel perceive him as a leader that is in need of development and monitoring. The teachers at Caden view Mr. Buddy, as a friend to the teacher's meaning they felt that whatever they would write on the discipline referral would be supported and they would not be questioned about their interventions or role in the event leading to the referral. Mr. Buddy appeared to be comfortable during his interview. He provided me with rich explanation of his background, and why teachers seemed to support him in the building.

The major themes have been described below. However, the subthemes are not completely mutually limited within each theme, as there unavoidably is some overlap. Furthermore, the themes are interdependent with one another; therefore, the lines of classification are occasionally blurred.

Research Questions

How do the primary key stakeholders (i.e. parents, teachers, administrators) experience the in-school suspension (ISS) process and placement of students at Caden Middle School experience the process?

In regards to the parents at Caden Middle School two out of the three parents both had a negative experience in how they experienced both the assignment of the consequence as well as the placement itself. One of the parents, Ms. Phoversity had never had any of her children placed in the in-school suspension program so her response was not valid.

According to Rosa X: *“No consequences were discussed with her at all, at any time, and she went on to say that she felt that the placement was inappropriate”*, this sentiment is supported by Mrs. Acres-Mule whom shared: *“Nothing was communicated to or with me, I found out many times after the consequence had already been served”*.

In analyzing the perceptions of the teachers, many of them had varying ideas on what the purpose of ISS was, as well as what infractions led to placement. This trend seems to be also true when discussing how the school communicated with parents and teachers regarding In-school suspension placements.

As Mr. Freespeak states: *“ Usually, I would –my other students would tell me that one of students would tell me that one of my students was in DMC” ...When discussing academic expectations many of the teachers felt that students receiving classwork to work in isolation without instructional support was appropriate based on the student’s behavior. Most of the teacher participants felt that students were placed*

based on minor infractions such as “tardiness” to class, which is supported by campus discipline for the 2010-2011 school years. Mr. Iknewknow stated: “Uh from my perspective, it seems to be just more minor-minor discipline is what a lot of these kids are getting put in for”. “Tardies-which can be dealt with by the teacher early on by communicating with parents”.

Mrs. Switchboard, stated: *“I remember a student last year who was tardy to class daily, and so he was put in DMC for good reason, if he can’t get to class on time he doesn’t deserve to be in class”.*

Participant statements such as these support the principal’s decision to focus on stream-lining communication and ensuring that it happens in a very purposeful and precise manner.

Administrators at Caden set the policy and procedures for the In-school suspension process at this particular campus so; their experience was from a facilitator perspective. Meaning they often initiated the process with both parents and sometimes with the teachers. However, in analyzing the research obtained through the interviews of both administrators as well as looking at school discipline data, there did seem to be a disconnect between what the principal’s interpretation of how the students, parents, and teachers should experience the process and how assistant principals on the campus were actually facilitating that process.

What are the perceptions of key stakeholders in regards to the school-wide positive behavior support system (SWPBS) as an intervention for (ISS) referral reduction?

In regards to the parents interviewed only two of the parents Ms. Phoversity and Rosa X, could only share that the purpose of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support was that of a preventative nature and of a positive nature. Rosa X states:

“I think the purpose is to all the students to focus more on preventative and positive behavior as opposed to waiting until something happens to discipline the child”.

Ms. Phoversity: “In the last year, here at Caden, I have seen the change, students are more polite, teachers are more polite to the students, this was not always so” ...she continued... “The PBIS program has enlightened students to be and act more positive. Although the parents had very little understanding of how school-wide positive behavior supports impacted referral reduction, they still could articulate the proactive nature of the program. When speaking with Mrs. Acres-Mule in regards to SWPBS her response: “I couldn’t tell you, I couldn’t tell you because I don’t think there were any behavior interventions for my non-hearing child”.

Teachers’ perceptions of SWPBS interventions being utilized as a means for referral reduction gave the principal investigator some much needed insight into teacher’s beliefs and philosophy regarding school discipline. Some teachers answered the question as if there were no current SWPBS interventions in place within the in-school suspension program. This was evident with Mr. Iknewknow. Once asked about his beliefs about the role of PBIS in the in-school suspension setting, his response, tone, and facial expression led the researcher to understand that he was speaking in future tense. *“I think that it could be a middle ground to keep some of the minor repeat*

offenders out, you know, to give them some type of accomplishment". When asked how PBIS look like when implemented in the in-school suspension program

Mr. Iknewknow informed me that: *"Yeah, I don't really know that one". I found the same experience with Ms. Cash, she could somewhat articulate what her beliefs about the role of PBIS in the in-school suspension setting by saying: "The purpose is to reduce the number of suspensions-period-by rewarding kids for their positive behavior".*

However, when I asked Ms. Cash about how did PBIS look or feel in the in-school suspension program at Caden, Gertrude replied: *"I don't know---I---I've only been in there maybe once or twice since I have been at Caden". She continued: "While I was in there I did see kids getting "Caden Cash" for those that were caught doing right".*

Other teachers such as Mr. Freespeak, Condinono Rice, and Nomo Tran-Ning also could not share their perception of how PBIS was implemented in the current in-school suspension program. The only outlier on this particular question came from Mrs. Switchboard whom answered the question in such a way leads one to question the campus plan for effective implementation.

Genny explains: *"The only thing that I know that I've seen is when the students behave appropriately they are rewarded by, maybe, getting a half day out of DMC due to their behavior".*

Both of the school administrators seem to have more of a grasp on what PBIS systems that were in place in the in-school suspension and how those interventions were

support student success by attempting to equip students with the tools not to return to such a setting.

This was evident in Dr. Janeway's response to the question, where she states: *"Currently the program "Ripple Effects" is mandatory for any student in the in-school suspension program"*. She continues citing that students are taught lesson surrounding the PBIS matrix which is campus specific.

In meeting with the district coordinator for PBIS, one of the issues that she was deeply concerned about was the overrepresentation of students of color in discipline placements. It was her opinion that Caden Middle School in the past had not fully implemented the PBIS interventions and protocols with fidelity creating a disconnect on many levels. In our four hour meeting, this district representative was very articulate about her concerns for students, and the instability of the PBIS program, teacher participation, as well as the incongruent professional development. At that time in the research, the district coordinator for PBIS had been working with me to revise, and revamping support systems to further interventions use with students placed at risk, sue to color and staff members whom could not look beyond their own social reproduction.

The views of both the campus principal and the assistant principal differ on this particular question. While the principal acknowledged the disparities among students of color, and the interventions that needed to be put in place, to ensure that students had access to a free appropriate education. Dr. Janeway fully supported any all methods to closing the achievement gap whether it is in academic or discipline data.

Mr. Buddy on the other hand, stated: *I don't see color, if they are a frequent flyer, then they are a frequent flyer, color is just a crutch*". He then went on to recount a story where he placed an African-American male in DMC for two weeks, and the mother accused him of being racist. He revoked the idea, and shared whenever a parent makes comments such as those they are just *"trying to beat the system"*.

With most of teachers that participated being of African-American descent, you would traditionally think that these teachers would be empathic regarding the overrepresentation of African-American and Hispanic students. Not the case in this study. With the exception of Mr. Freespeak, all teachers that participated felt that students of color felt no difference in treatment regarding their placement in the in-school suspension program.

Mr. Freespeak stated: *"Many of the teachers, don't wanna deal with the black kids, so they just dump them in DMC, for the kid to learn nothing"*.

What are the perceptions of key stakeholders in regards to academic curricular expectations and necessary components while in the in-school suspension program?

In exploring this perception, we find that Ms. Phoversity one of the parents that participated in this study, did not know of any academic requirements or expectations for the in-school suspension program because neither of her children was ever placed in that setting. Mrs. Acres-Mule one of the participating parent stated during their interviews that *"no academic expectations were ever discussed with them either before or after the DMC placement"*.

Of the teachers involved with this study two of them; Tara Founder, and Nomo Tran-Ning had no idea what the academic expectations were in regards to the DMC program at Caden Middle School. As for the remaining teachers, they all knew that they were required to send work or hand-outs and those students had to complete them but that was all. None of the teachers interviewed were aware of the principal's expectation for teachers to supply all additional learning resources associated to the students lesson such as: dictionaries, thesaurus math charts...etc... During the member-checking portion of this process I asked each participant to add or clarify any additional information regarding academic expectations for the in-school suspension program and received similar response to the initial interview. Teachers seem to not have any concern about the lost opportunities for corrective teaching and or instructional support for students who were in need of intensive instructional support for academic needs.

Once again the perceptions of the administrators regarding academic expectations and outcomes in the in-school suspension setting seem to be drastically disconnected from the perceptions of the teachers and parents. The principal, Dr. Janeway's expectation is that each and every student's teachers are notified to prepare classwork for the students. She seems very confident that most if not all teachers are aware of this process and procedure. She states that: *"Teachers are asked to submit assignments for the day(s) students are assigned"*. She further explains: *"Teacher is asked to provide all materials that students would regularly access in the classroom in order to be successful on instructional tasks"*.

Dr. Janeway concludes the answer to this question by saying: *“Teachers are expected to visit students who may need additional assistance during their planning periods. In addition, content specialists visit the in-school suspension room daily”*. However, she does admit that this does not happen with consistency.

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Do the perceptions of the (ISS) process and placement of students among different key stakeholders differ and if so, how?

The perceptions of the parents differ in both the understanding of the PBIS systems, the process to which one is placed in the in-school suspension system, and knowledge of the academic expectations associated with placement in the in-school suspension program. In addition, parents overwhelming felt that the school did not communicate with them in regards to assignment to PBIS.

Teachers also struggled with having a consistent understanding of PBIS. Five of the teachers that participated in this study understood how students were placed in the DMC program. However, they often times felt like administration did not notify them when one of their students were assigned. When questioned about how PBIS currently looks like in the DMC setting, none of the teachers could answer the question with an answer of certainty. Three out of the seven teachers mentioned that tardies were many

of the reasons that students had been placed in the in-school suspension setting, which was contradictory of guidelines outlined by the principal interview describing what infractions that are considered for in-school suspension programs. Outside of completing classroom assignments no teacher could share any specific academic expectations that promoted student growth and or success.

While both of the administrators that participated in this study had a pretty good grasp and understanding of PBIS, the academic expectations associated DMC placement, and communication and perceptions of and about the placement in DMC differed greatly between the two administrators. It was clear in reviewing interview notes and during the member-checking phase of the research that the policies that the assistant principal was following varied from the principal's idea of what constituted an in-school suspension placement.

Summary

The results of this study show that after one year of focusing on exploring the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of PBIS in reducing the recidivism rate of students of color in the in-school suspension setting requires an effective leadership that has a strong vision for students success, fidelity of implementation, strong communication among all stakeholder, and continuous professional development for not only administrators and teachers, but also for parents so that they understand processes and procedures for DMC. In reviewing the results one can see the impact of loss of instructional time due to mis-behavior defeats the purpose of a Discipline Alternative Education Placement by definition alone. The students that

are repeatedly placed in these settings are becoming victims of the school's inability to implement a program with fidelity.

During the study year, five themes were generated: 1) Perceptions of Caden Middle School, 2) Perceptions of PBIS, 3) Perceptions of In-school suspension, 4) Perceptions of staff development, and 5) Perceptions of Academic Expectations. Each of the aforementioned themes also contained sub themes. Responses from each participant were reported within the context of each research question. From the data analysis it is clear that Caden Middle School is experiencing incomplete success among students of color primarily due to its inability to effectively communicate to both teachers and parents the purpose of PBIS, the expectations and purpose of DMC, leaving most of the parents with a negative perception of Caden Middle School. In addition, lack of consistency in regards strategic staff development for parents, teachers, and administrators has created a dis-jointed and incomplete implementation of both the PBIS system, as well as an effective disciplinary alternative education program.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this final chapter we will conclude with recommendations for future implementation and practice, research and was evidenced by the literature and findings from this research. This record of study was a problem of practice to investigate the perceptions of 7 teachers, 3 parents, and 2 administrators as they experienced Caden Middle School and its effort to implement both School-Wide Positive Behavior Support systems in the in-school suspension program to reduce the number of students of color receiving repeated placements. This study sought to identify and describe campus procedures and policies for placement as well as interventions put in place at Caden Middle School being in its fourth year as a PBIS campus. In comparing academic achievement data to discipline and in-school placement data it was realized that many of the same students that were not success on the state assessment were many of the same students that served repeatedly in the in-school suspension classroom. This realization led the researcher to examine the in-school suspension's contribution to the achievement gap, and if putting positive behavior supports in place in the in-school suspension program as an additional supporting mechanism to the school-wide, and classroom positive behavior support systems already in place. When educators can identify a contributor to the achievement gap they may possibly work more diligently on strategies to reduce the gap in achievement.

The following questions were explored in this study: How do the primary key stakeholders involved in the in-school suspension (ISS) program at Caden Middle School experience the process? What are the perceptions of key stakeholders in regards to the school-wide positive behavior support system (SWPBS) as an intervention for referral reduction? What are the perceptions of the key stakeholders in regards to academic curricular components necessary to include in an ISS program? How do the key stakeholders involved in the placement students of color in the ISS program experience the process? Do the perceptions of the different key stakeholders differ and if so, how?

Field notes from faculty, PBIS Level I and II, instructional team meetings, discipline data, as well as the semi-structured participant interviews provided a wealth of data regarding perceptions of PBIS, the in-school suspension program known as DMC, and the perception of Caden Middle School itself. In this chapter a summary of the research findings will be given, followed by implications and recommendations for future practice. Throughout this study five major themes emerged: 1) Perceptions of Caden Middle School, 2) Perceptions of PBIS, 3) Perceptions of In-school suspension, 4) Perceptions of staff development, and 5) Perceptions of Academic Expectations. Each of the aforementioned themes also contained sub themes.

The first theme, perceptions of Caden Middle School, was emerged as a result of the parents that participated in this research. During every interview with each parent, I found that they took considerable time in discussing their perception of the school itself, and how their interactions with the school whether it was direct or indirect through their

child, aided their sense-making in regards to perception. In researching past literature regarding both attribution theory and perceptions in the setting of education, very little literature pertaining to perception involves parents perception of the school itself when addressing issues of discipline. This is an area where more research is needed for future studies. During two of the three parent interviews, the parents were a unanimous negative perception of Caden Middle School itself, based on their experiences in dealing with their child's disciplinary placements. This is evident in the following excerpts from the parent interview from Mrs. Acres-Mule: "Honestly speaking, I am not comfortable with Caden Middle School. I am not comfortable with the way that my son has been treated at Caden Middle School". Teacher perceptions of Caden middle school for the most part were very positive and optimistic when discussing both PBIS, in-school suspension and the placement of students repeatedly in that setting. Mr. Iknewnow was the only teacher whom had a differing perspective. Being the most addition to the teaching staff, he seemed to compare and contrast his experience in his former school district as way to develop his own sense-making strategies for successful integration in the school's culture. "It seems that the teachers here at Caden, don't work to develop relationships with the students, they are accustomed to writing the "bad ones" who are usually the black and Mexican ones up and sending them out". He continued "Teachers say that the students and neighborhood has gone down and that it is nothing but ghetto". Tara Founder also one of the teacher participants added to the conversation: "The former administration at Caden allowed teachers to have more professional discretion when it came to recommending students for disciplinary placements"..."Dr. Janeway, has

changed that along with the new lead assistant principal...”Caden is now hanging to favor students over the adults, many of the staff do not like this....” In the literature we find that sources of influence such as variables, like teacher efficacy, tolerance for misbehavior, and teacher stress support the why in how parents perceive the campus in such a negative light, mainly due to their interactions with the teacher and staff.

However, there is a statement made by the teacher, Tara Founder support research presented in the literature review. Her comment explained how teachers perceived the change brought about from the leadership change at Caden, in regards to both PBIS and in-school suspension. Weiner, 1983 “teacher perceptions could be changed with the presentation of objective information”. With all of the many structures, and re-focused efforts on both PBIS, and in-school suspension, while also making a conscience effort to present discipline data in a regular manner at all instructional team meetings has made an impact on teacher perception. Although, not immediate, the change is happening over time, with fidelity.

The second theme, Perceptions of PBIS additionally resonated throughout the study year. During any and all interactions there was always “symptoms of misunderstanding” of what PBIS really was, and how it was to function. The organization prior to the new administration really never analyzed discipline data or examined the data trends to for possible remedies. Although in the four years prior to this study, the staff approved the implementation of the PBIS system on their campus with a resounding 90% approval vote. One questions the organizational structure at the district level in regards to program evaluation on effectiveness in communicating the

true purpose of school-wide positive behavior supports, specifically PBIS in the Bring-Together School District. The purpose of school-wide positive behavior supports is to decrease problem behaviors and increase positive behaviors in order to influence the quality of life for students and adults building wide (Carr, 2007; Carr, 2002; Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2009). In Bring-Together ISD the purpose of PBIS is defined as: “To create and maintain an effective learning environment, establishing behavioral supports and a social culture needed for all students in a school to achieve social, emotional, and academic success” (CFISD, 2012). While both of these expectations are in alignment in reviewing the data collected from interview transcripts and other artifacts show that on the campus of Caden the perceptions of PBIS are dramatically different among teachers and parents.

One parent, Mrs. Phoversity in her description of PBIS used a description of a “*student turning in an Ipod*”, and was sure that PBIS was a “two year process”. Mrs. Acres-Mule said that she couldn’t tell me because she was unaware of PBIS or what it was or meant. When speaking with teachers, Mr. Inewknow attributed the program to receiving prizes. In his example, “*The kids are very active in receiving Campbell Cash, very active in receiving a prize*”. Mr. Freespeak thought the purpose of PBIS was that “*A group of teachers formed a committee to oversee things like infractions, numerous infractions and ways that we can deter them in the future*”. Outside of that statement he did not see how he was connected to the program. Genny Switchboard a teacher at Caden also shows the inconsistency in understanding the “bottom-line” of the

intervention program by sharing: *“A tool that we use to increase good behavior, based on mostly a reward system”*. In her interview she did go further to state that: *“The role of PBIS is a lot different this year, they are actually implementing strategies around the building especially in DMC”*. Both administrators interviewed had answers that closely aligned with the district expectations of the program however, further analysis of the discipline placement habits of the Assistant principal showed a disconnect in his statements provided for this study and his actions taken when fulfilling the duties of his role at Caden.

The third theme that emerged among all of the key stakeholders who participated was the perception of the in-school suspension or (DMC) program itself. O’Brien (1976) described that in-school suspension programs were to be “three-fourths education and one-fourths punishment”. One of the major components of this Minneapolis program was to teach students to accept consequences for their actions and make them think about what they’re doing”. It wasn’t until Sullivan (1996) did we see in-school suspension programs being considered for places needing a “rehabilitative focuses that must be identified and resolved”.

In discussing the subtheme “understanding placement”, all stakeholders seemed to be confused on the school’s procedure and rationale on placing students in the in-school suspension program. The parents seem to be especially unaware of what behaviors constituted a placement in DMC. Rosa X remarks, *“My son was placed in DMC for aiding another student who was being bullied, he pushed the other student away but, because there was physical contact he was punished, he has Asperger’s’ and*

sometime cannot respect boundaries but the assistant principal told me that didn't matter". Although the principal was very clear in her explanation of the communication process in regards to administrators communicating and contacting with teachers and students say: "Administrators should call and conference with parents prior to the placement in DMC, and communicate with teachers to inform them of the placement so that they may get the student's instructional materials together". It was clear that this expectation has not translated into fruition. As Mrs. Acres-Mule another parent explains "They just suspended my deaf child from learning, pulled him away from his peers, and gave him paperwork to do, even though his penmanship is that of a kinder-garden student, he was isolated in a room where he could not communicate with anyone, I didn't understand why they would do that to a child with special needs.....no, one called me, or explained why he was there...they just threw him in that room".

Teacher perceptions about placement in DMC or ISS centered making sense of students being assigned or referred to the in-school suspension program repeatedly for minor issues such as tardies. This too, was at odds with the principal's expectations for students being referred to the in-school suspension program. When asked why are students considered for in-school suspension? Dr. Janeway answered: *"Violation of level II and III infractions"*, these infractions are more severe infractions for instances such as fights, profanity, and school disruption, tardies are a level I infraction according to the Bring-Together ISD student code of conduct. Another subtheme that emerged from the research was that of communication about the placement. In all interviews with both

parents and teachers there was little to no communication from the administration regarding the placement, and or what led up to the placement.

The fourth theme that surfaced as a result of the data analysis process is that of perceptions of staff development for PBIS and in-school suspension. This theme surfaced out of the perception literature when discussing teacher efficacy and their own levels of self-efficacy when implementing programs, or following new guidelines and or procedures. During our discussion about the literature relating to this research both in the discussion of SWPBS, In-school suspension settings, and perception literature all discussed the value of being purposeful about providing teachers with information in an objective manner to assist in “shifting” their perception and or understanding of an issue to better promote practices that remedy such issues. This can most effectively be achieved through professional and staff development. To compound the issue the earlier examination of the participant’s working knowledge of PBIS informs the principal investigator that in order to bring the campus in alignment with district expectations for PBIS, they must focus on more professional development. The dis-jointed understanding and perceptions discovered through the collection of interviews serve as a “testament” for the glaring lack of adult education or professional development.

The perceptions of the teachers in regards to staff development, we all basically the same, most of them had received little to no training that addressed how PBIS should look, feel, or be addressed within the classroom, or campus level. What was worse is that some teachers felt that they really didn’t need any formal training. This is made very clear by Mr. Inewknow who shared the following: “No, not really any training on

PBIS, I really don't need much because I already use a reward system on top of PBIS, so I don't need any more help". Other teachers were confused about when they had the training and what implementation year that PBIS was actually established on the campus. Mr. Freespeak stated: "Well off the top of my head, other than in-school professional development which is a thirty minute hit or miss, I really couldn't say anything specifically". Tara Founder actually identified a professional development that she attended as a part of PBIS but, in reviewing her professional development records it was actually for differentiated instruction, and not for PBIS.

The principal herself, Dr. Janeway also is lacking in the field of professional development regarding to both in-school suspension setting and PBIS. In her interview, Dr. Janeway shares "I have never received any former training on in-school suspension programs. I was introduced to this type of program when I first moved to Texas and work in a neighboring school district". No wonder the disjointed and various perceptions of both PBIS and in-school suspension among the key stakeholders involved in this study. Adult education efforts have taken a backseat to a complex program that needs stability and fidelity in its implementation yet the focus on professional development has let the students and parents down denying them access to a free and appropriate education.

The fifth theme that emerged was Perceptions of Academic Expectations. Martin (1976) posited: "The absence of curriculum from in-school suspension constrains opportunities for students". In his research he discussed that students had rights and

obligations to academic activities that promoted social organization as well as their educational rights and obligations provided with a free and appropriate education.

In the case of Caden Middle School, missing curriculum is exactly what the students assigned to DMC experienced anytime they were assigned to this placement. Although it is an expectation set forth by the principal, more than 60% of the instructional days during the 2010-2011 school years found the DMC room without instructional lesson plans and or classwork for students to complete while in the in-school suspension setting. Efforts to remedy this issue, has do nothing but create a precarious political gesturing similar to that of the complex workings of our United States Congress during their session. No formal documentation or conversations were ever held with students whom were often delinquent in providing instructional materials for their students assigned to the DMC program, meaning, what's not inspected, is not expected.

Relationship of this Study to the Research Literature

Educator Perceptions

As it relates to the teachers perceptions of their students, PBIS, and DMC, most of the teachers with the exception of Mr. Freespeak and Mr. Inewknow, felt that the students that were placed repeatedly in In-school suspension setting at Caden were disruptive elements to the school and deserved each and every placement. The teachers did not seemed concerned or bothered that students were missing out on instruction, or that many of the students often did not receive any classroom work, and or instructional support. Out of the seven, five of the teacher participants felt that education was a

privilege and once the student “acted out” they deserved to lose that privilege of being in the normal classroom environment. What is very interesting about this sentiment is that four of the teachers were of African-American descent. The literature ties teacher perceptions of their students’ behavior to their own teacher self-efficacy (Liljesqueist & Renk, 2007; Battalio & Morin, 2004; Evers, Tomic, & Brouwers, 2004; Poulou & Norwich, 2002; Hughes, Barker, Kemenoff, & Hart, 1993; Safran, Safran, & Barcikowski, 1990; Smart, Wilton, & Keeling, 1980; Gronlund, 1955). In other words, being that many of these teachers have been a part of the culture of many years they own self-efficacy will determine if they are able to change their perception.

Special Education and In-School Suspension

Hartwig & Ruesch (2000), “schools may repeatedly remove a student from the classroom setting, while not being responsible for providing education services, but once a child has reached its ten day cumulative suspension days in a year, the school must provide services for any subsequent days for removal. This became a prevalent issue in this study as two of my participating parents; Rosa X, and Mrs. Acres-Mule both have children that receive services under the umbrella of special education. Rosa X’s son has Asperger’s and Arces-Mule’s son is deaf and completely non-hearing. Yet, both of their child had been placed repeatedly in the in-school suspension setting for instances on many questions where “subjective” in interpretation.

Upon my arrival at Caden Middle School I was tasked with management of DMC, the campus-based in-school suspension program. After completing a program analysis, I was floored at the number of students with the classification had been placed

in the in-school suspension setting, on many occasions without receiving any instructional support. When I took steps to correct this issue, I was met with aggression, hostility, and push-back from special education teachers, and fellow administrators. They're argument centered on special education students being "treated just like any regular students", which from my perspective was not the true translation of this particular policy. In later reflection, it occurred to me that the mindset that I had encountered was an example of interpreting "new" policy relating to positive behavior support initiatives being interpreted through the philosophical lens called zero tolerance. "Zero tolerance policy was defined as a school district policy that mandates predetermined consequences/s or punishment for specific offenses" (Christensen, 2003). This mode of thought seemed to always trump the student's individualized education plan or IEP and never considered if the behavior was a symptom of the student's disability. In addition, there were instances where administrators would suspend students with disabilities so severe, that they were placed in more restrictive educational settings known as: "Life skills". Upon observing this, I had to inform the principal, whom overruled the decision made by the assistant principal.

Experiences as a participant-observer coupled with the analysis and triangulation of the data collected during this research further illustrates how zero tolerance policies and procedures are still very prevalent and how new policy is being often translated through the lens' of zero tolerance.

Middle School Philosophy

The National Middle Schools Association in 1998 set a new president for middle schools across America when they released the document titled: “This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools”. In this document stated: “that if middle schools are to become developmentally responsive, educators must be grounded in the diverse needs and characteristics of these adolescent pupils”. The document went further stating that: “educators should understand the intellectual, moral, physical emotional/psychological and social developments of middle school students”.

In this particular study, there were instances that I observed instances where teachers, and administrators had not completely “bought” into this mode of thinking at least when putting policy into action. If Caden Middle School truly wants to promote student success both academically and behaviorally, key stakeholders must commit to the tenants expressed in the vision for middle schools outlined by the document from the NMSA.

Zero Tolerance

Although the literature from Lyons (2003), and Sautner (2001) have reported that use of zero tolerance policies has never able to demonstrate its effectiveness in improving conduct. Furthermore research from Sautner (2001), confirms that the practices associated with zero tolerance policies often led students to drop-out, and or introduces them to the judicial system. Yet, throughout this research project I found many behaviors and actions on part of both administrators and teachers that were belief systems that heavily aligned with zero tolerance practices. This view of policy is the

adverse of what school-wide positive behavior supports are designed to accomplish in educational settings. This way of interpreting policy also supported the literature that states that zero tolerance discipline policies disproportionately affect African American and Hispanic students, who are suspended at approximately three times the rate of white students (Fenning & Bohanon, 2006; Rausch & Skiba, 2004). This trend too was evident in the discipline data for the 2010-2011 school years at Caden Middle School. As I conclude this analysis I am faced with new questions that have surfaced per this examination. What steps could the leadership take to curb the impact of zero tolerance philosophy being used to interpret current policy designed to operate under a PBIS framework? Would the faculty and staff be able to understand or accept the rationale for change? Zero tolerance policies have been heavily relied on as an exclusionary measure as a means of deterring and punishing students who exhibit violent behavior (Price, 2002). Of course in the context of this study, the campus examined often interpreted “zero tolerance” as the rationale for excluding students from classroom instruction while resting on the laurels of “zero tolerance”. This means that many students of color were being removed from their instructional setting based on subjective behaviors such as tardies, and excessive talking, rarely something of a “violent nature”.

In-School Suspension

Sheets (1996), defined in-school suspension as “a program to which a student is assigned because of disruptive behavior for a specific amount of time”. In the instance of body of research the perceptions of both parents and teachers were that that students were being placed in the DMC program repeatedly for minor and or subjective behaviors

not taking into account of the student's disability or individualized educational plan. At Caden, this was compounded with issues of student's losing instructional time, while not being provided with instructional support materials or access to a certified teacher to address the learner needs.

In the review of research, we understand that in-school suspension programs are commonplace across our great nation, so why is there very little emphasis placed on the organization, structure, and or components necessary for an effective program. Throughout much of the fragmented literature that I reviewed for this study, I found that for every school in the American public school system, there is an in-school suspension program that functions in it's on specific way. Some focus more on punitive than instruction, and some may even have some therapeutic components associated with them for students but none are regulated to a degree to ensure that students are receiving their free and appropriate education.

The goal of an In-school suspension program that implements PBIS interventions is the end goal for Caden middle school according to Tomczyk (2000) who viewed a ISS program with positive behavior supports as working "so effectively that it dramatically changes the discipline climate and suspension rate in their school".

Response to Intervention

Recent updates to state and federal special education guidelines are changing the way schools are expected to support students with problem behavior. Traditionally, approaches to assisting these students included parent conferences, observations, a minimum number of general interventions, a review of educational and social records,

and a psychological evaluation (Special Programs for Students who are Emotionally Handicapped, 2006). Now, with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act and revision of IDEA, schools are being encouraged to turn toward proactive approaches that match the service a student receives with his/her level of need.

One such approach is called Response to Intervention, or RtI. RtI is defined as “the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to important educational decisions” (Batsche, 2006). SWPBS is a process that is consistent with the core principles of RtI. Similar to RtI, SWPBS offers a range of interventions that are systematically applied to students based on their demonstrated level of need, and addresses the role of the environment as it applies to development and improvement of behavior problems. Both RtI and SWPBS are grounded in differentiated instruction. Each approach delineates critical factors and components to be in place at the universal (Tier 1), targeted group (Tier 2), and individual (Tier 3) levels.

At Caden middle school RtI is in its beginning year for implementation. We have had team meetings with all departments and have facilitated professional development linking RtI to PBIS, and what it means for students and student reeivement in our school. The premise being, that when implemented with fidelity, by teaching and reinforcing expected behaviors, teachers and other professionals using PBIS increase the probability that the majority of students and adults will act according

to the expectations, and acts as a proactive intervention for students with a history of problem behavior.

School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports

The SWPBS framework mandated for use at Caden Middle School with a 90% staff voting is presented and each level of support in the framework is reviewed in this section. The Bring-Together independent school district does not approve implementation of the SWPBS or PBIS program without the staff approval. An understanding of this particular SWPBS model is relevant to the problem of practice because this is the model that is being evaluated in the referral reduction task. This is a relevant aspect of the dissertation since it provides an underlying basis for understanding the need to further evaluate SWPBS programs in in-schools suspension settings.

The aim of SWPBS is to decrease problem behaviors and increase positive behaviors in order to influence the quality of life for individuals with behavioral disabilities or other disorders that impact behavior (Carr, 2007; Carr, 2002; Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2009). According to the research literature, SWPBS has been implemented at school-wide and program-wide levels. In these settings, all school staff work together to teach behavioral expectations and social skills, and to provide individualized interventions to those students most at risk for future problems (Fox, 2005). This is something that administration and teacher leaders at Caden Middle School are working together to get accomplished. There must be a stronger emphasis placed on professional development, and creating staff development that combines the

instructional and curricular components such as: differentiated instruction and Quantum Learning, and combine them with PBIS intervention strategies and procedures. Caden Middle School is now in Year Five of its implementation at Level II or III level of implementation. Yet, we have a long way to go and a lot of ground to cover in regards to sustaining what has been recovered, and what is left to conquer. The program is still not fully accepted by the culture of the campus, and threats to budget-funding have the program losing funding yearly. In addition, teachers and staff members must be held accountable for ensuring that each classroom in the building has a solid foundation and cooperation in the implementation of the PBIS system.

Recommendations for Future Practice and Research

The results of this study further demonstrate some of the problems with program implementation and effectively meeting the needs of students placed in campus-based in-school suspension classrooms. Each of the key stakeholder perceptions is particularly meaningful since they relate their experience with both PBIS and their perceptions of DMC as all of the same unique and individual experience, and are now being to ask questions that surfaced since their involvement with this study.

What I Learned from This Study

What I have learned as an African-American man from this problem of practice as it relates to the children of color who are placed at risk when teachers discipline them without really seeing or knowing them. As a culturally responsive leader I recognize the disparities that exist in our schools and raise issues of preference, legitimizations, privilege, and equity (Lindsey, Roberts, Campbell-Jones, 2005). That being said I can

more readily identify these obstacles and their impact on student learning and achievement. My responsibility as a culturally responsive leader is to build capacity over time so that they are “culturally proficient meaning that they understand how to interact effectively with students and adults in their environment whom are different from them (Lindsey Roberts, Campbell-Jones, 2005). PBIS in the context of Bring-Together ISD is intended as vehicle for educational leaders to transform schools from punitive institutions that isolate and alienate students of color, to center for adolescent development and growth which supports the ideology and philosophy of being a culturally proficient school. This is made clear in the district’s mission statement for PBIS. According to Bring-Together ISD: “ To create and maintain an effective learning environment, establishing behavioral supports and a social culture needed for all students in a school to achieve social, emotional and academic success”.

In Bring-Together ISD, this system of PBIS is intended to transition from the ideology offered by the use of zero tolerance policies and move to systems that through purposeful implementation and sustainment can create cultures that are developmentally responsive to the needs of all students especially students of color.

Developmentally responsive middle schools should be characterized by educators who are committed to young adolescents, a shared vision, and an adult advocate for every student, and high expectations for all students, a positive school climate, and family and community partnerships (NMSA, 1998; Remington, 2000). According to proposal from Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century (1995) challenged and urged all American institutions (family, schools, youth service

organizations, health-care organizations and the media) to reinforce the systems of support for adolescents. *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989) through its eight recommendations for transforming the education of young adolescents was widely circulated and placed middle level education on the national agenda. While this research perspective is nothing new to the literature, at Caden Middle School the connection between the aforementioned policy recommendations and what teacher's interpretation of PBIS is at a huge disconnect.

Administrators, and teachers, at Caden Middle School do not seem to fully understand their role in the promotion and sustainment in the PBIS system. I found that they often brought own social reproduction and personal beliefs in to play when carryout their decision in regards to disciplining students. Delpit (1988) discussed how many European American teachers may have the best intentions for their non-European American students when expressing statements such as, "I want the same thing for everyone else's children as I want for mine" (p. 285); however, the cultural experiences that African American children bring to the classroom don't often mirror those of European American children. Delpit (1998). This sentiment mirror's what I believe is happening at Caden Middle School

This problem of practice has provided me with an understanding of how zero tolerance policies when interpreted through the subjective lens of a teacher and or administrator without taking into account the many opportunities lose for students when they are repeated placed in in-school suspension setting without access to instruction or instructional materials. There were many lessons learned from examining this problem

of practice and documenting the transition from out-of-compliance practices, to those that are more aligned with the PBIS framework and intervention system, as well as becoming more aligned with district expectations and guidelines regarding PBIS. As instructional leader of color, I have always been concerned that my child would be able to receive a free and appropriate education which is promised to all students in American despite his behavior, or perception of mis-behavior. Furthermore, as an African-American male I have always be vested in finding new ways for schools to be a positive support for African-American males so that they do not become “frequent flyers” in the DMC program. As research has shown, those “frequent flyers” in the in-school suspension programs often become drop-outs, and then they become inmates and institutionalized damaged for their lifetime.

This may be the ending of this record of study but, it is the beginning of a new chapter at Caden Middle School. After a year under the administration of Dr. Janeway, Caden is on its way to achieving high academic standards for all students while meeting the diverse needs of all learners that walk through its doors daily. Like anyone new to a system, I had to learn the rules of the culture, and learn how to operate within those rules. There were also times that Dr. Janeway and I had to challenge those rules even at the district level. Although many of the teachers did not appear at times to have the best interest of the students at Caden, fortunately at the conclusion of the 2011 school year some of the teachers of the “foundation” or core of the negative Caden culture either retired or moved on to another school. This gave us the opportunity this past summer to recruit and hire based on our goals for student achievement and success.

During the study year, I found that the teachers that participated in the study wanted to be successful teachers, but they wanted it to be their way, and by their rules using their definition for success. This would be a fine notion if the teachers themselves were the clients but they are the workers, the facilitators of knowledge, charged to instruct at the child's individual and level and need. Since Dr. Janeway's tenure teachers have learned that relationship building was important and it assisted them in the process of improvement particularly among students of color.

Overall the findings of this study affirm what other research studies indicate; specifically that placements in-school suspension programs repeated over time without knowledge of interventions can negatively impact parent perceptions of the school. Moreover, the finding in this study and related studies by Moses (2001), Keleher (2000), and Curwin and Mendler (1999) all suggest that administrators that dispense discipline consequences under zero tolerance policies further segregates students of color who are already at risk for school failure.

As a qualitative study, the intent is not to generalize findings, but rather to contribute to the literature a richer, more in-depth understanding of the findings. Implicit within this research approach is a post-positivistic lens where truth is presented from the participants' perspective. Previous research often did not allow multiple key stakeholders to express their perspectives of the in-school suspension experience. This study attempted to add a more in-depth authentic view of how various groups of key stakeholders view both positive behavior supports and its use in the in-school suspension program as a tool to diminish the recidivism rate of students of color.

Conclusion

The results illuminate the rich and personal perceptions of each participant. The current study is especially valuable due to the qualitative richness it adds to this body of literature. Recognizing the gaps in information between the three groups of key stakeholders interviewed will assist and challenge school districts to improve discipline procedures in disciplinary alternative educational placements especially on the fifty-two campuses that are PBIS campuses. By giving each key stakeholder's perception a voice and showing how their perceptions overlap, the study demonstrates where gaps in communication exist and where improvements are needed for supporting middle school students that are deep in adolescent development. The qualitative approach used may elucidate patterns that will influence policy or program changes and ultimately reduce recidivism rates among students of color.

Implications for Future Research

Further, as a result of this study, the following recommendations are offered for future practice and research:

1. At the district level and campus level, combine all administrative and teacher roles and responsibilities to address both instruction and behavioral components, in all facets of the school organization. This will assist in allowing teachers to better understand their role as both an instructional facilitator and classroom manager.
2. At the district level, retraining and redefining expectations for school wide positive behavior support initiatives complete with research literature from

around the country so that administrators will all have a more aligned lens to examine discipline issues when they arise.

3. At the district level, and overhaul of current training and practices pertaining to the disciplining of students classified as special education students. Then, taking the steps to re-train every administrator, teacher, and staff member on the do's and don'ts regarding to special education students and special education law.
4. I would also recommend future research that includes focus groups of various key stakeholders at different schools to strategize regarding the identified themes.
5. At the campus level, dedicate a full-day comprehensive review of PBIS as a professional development outlining the foundational components as well as district expectations per implementation in the classroom and school wide. It is my recommendation that this is done twice during the school year.
6. Recommend that the district institute a "peer-review" style program evaluation system where other PBIS teams visit campuses such as Caden for an entire day observing PBIS practices and making recommendations for continuous program improvement.
7. Focus on professional and staff development at the campus level that centers in on the receivment gap (Chambers, 2009) that may currently exist at Caden Middle school. The recognition that students achieve base on what they received from their teachers focusing on improving academics and behavior.
8. Review of existing policies that may interfere with the delivery of culturally responsive teaching and intervention strategies. Reviews should include key

stakeholders such as parents and community advocates to objectively offer suggestions for improvement.

9. The invitation of parents and community stakeholders to come and join the faculty and staff in a staff development about positive behavior intervention and supports and how it looks at Caden Middle School. This opportunity should also be used to inform parents of their responsibilities as promoters of the school and this program.
10. The use of Quantum learning strategies. In the suburban context Quantum Learning has been successful in narrowing the achievement gap while presenting a form of culturally responsive pedagogy those teachers can grasp in a non-threatening manner.

As research on the both school-wide positive behavior support systems and in-school suspension programs continues to unfold and legislation regarding placement and frequency of placement evolves, developing the appropriate balance between competing rights of multiple stakeholders continues to be a challenge that can best be met through careful consideration of all involved.

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APPENDIX A

Introductory Demographics and Interview Background Information

Demographic Data:

Gender: _____

Race or Ethnicity: _____

Age: _____

Demographic Questions:

1. Interviewee title (parent, teacher, or school administrator): _____

2. Name of current school: _____

3. Preferred method of communication (phone, e-mail, or mail)?

APPENDIX B

Parent Interview Questions

Opening Statement: I will ask you some questions about your child's placement(s) in the in-school suspension program and SWPBS or PBIS. If you do not recall some things or if something I ask is not clear, feel free to let me know. I am interested in your perceptions and want you to know that your answers are neither right nor wrong. You will not be identified in this study. The purpose of these questions are to gain an understanding of your perceptions in regards to the In-school Suspension program, and implementation of the preventive interventions to reduce the number of students of color being placed in this setting repeatedly.

1. What was your child's school experience like before placement in the in-school suspension program?
2. What were you told about the academic expectations of in-school suspension?
3. Has your child ever received other discipline consequences? If so, what kind and how many times?
4. Tell me about the events that led up to the placement in the in-school suspension program?
5. Did you have any knowledge of the PBIS give meaning of acronym the first time. Program and its purpose?
6. How did you find out that the incident would be considered a placement warranting in-school suspension?
7. Please share with me what happened and what was discussed during your contact with the administrator?
8. Did you understand the procedures for in-school suspension placement during this process?
9. What was your understanding of the placement? Was it appropriate in your opinion?
10. What do behavioral interventions look like at Caden Middle School?

11. What is the purpose of interventions in regards to discipline?
12. Were disciplinary consequences discussed and if so what options were shared?
13. Did you feel that prior behavioral interventions had been exhausted prior to this placement?

APPENDIX C

Principal Interview Questions

Opening Statement: I will ask you some background questions and then I will ask you some questions about PBIS, and the in-school suspension program and process. All identifiable information will be kept confidential.

1. How many years' experience have you had as a Principal?
2. What are your expectations of the In-school suspension program?
3. Have you received training pertaining to PBIS and in-school suspension programs (i.e. state or district in-service)? If so, please share examples.
4. Are you familiar with your school's procedures for in-school suspension placement?
5. How are academics addressed in the in-school suspension program?
6. What are the current SWPBS interventions in place in the in-school suspension program? Are they followed consistently?
7. Why are students considered for in-school suspension? This should probably be the second sentence.
8. Tell me what should happen and what should be discussed at during the time of parent contact with the administrator when considering in-school suspension?
9. Describe your understanding of the PBIS or SWPBS program? Come sooner.
10. Are educational placement options discussed (when?) and if so what were the options?
11. Did you feel that this placement corrects the misbehavior? How does this placement impact student misbehavior?

APPENDIX D

Administrator Interview Questions

Opening Statement: I will ask you some background questions and then I will ask you some questions about the in-school suspension program, and SWPBS. All identifiable information will be kept confidential.

1. How many years' experience have you had in assigning disciplinary consequences as a school administrator?
2. What data do you utilize prior to placing students in in-school suspension?
3. Have you received training pertaining to SWPBS and how it relates to in-school suspension placement (i.e. state or district in-service)?
4. Are you familiar with your school district expectations for the in-school suspension program on a SWPBS campus?
5. What steps must you take before you place a student in the in-school suspension program in regards to PBIS interventions?
6. Had this student previously been suspended or placed in the in-school suspension program?
7. Why was this student considered for placement in in-school suspension?
8. Tell me what happened and what was discussed during the conference with the student, as well as with the parent?
9. Describe the procedures used to determine if this particular incident warranted placement in the in-school suspension setting?
10. Were educational placement options were discussed and if so what were the options?
11. Did you feel that the decisions were supported by the parents?
12. How are academics addressed in the in-school suspension program?

APPENDIX E

Teacher Interview Questions

Opening Statement: I will ask you some questions about your students that you have referred for discipline issue that received in-school suspension placements to correct their behavior. If you do not recall some things or if something does or did not make sense then please say this is the case. I am interested in your perceptions and want you to know that your answers are neither right nor wrong. You will not be identified in this study.

1. What grade and subject did you teach during the 2010-2011 school year?
2. What is your understanding of the SWPBS or PBIS system?
3. How does this translate or look like in the in-school suspension program?
4. Have you received any training on the PBIS system? If so, tell me about the training.
5. Tell me about the specific events that led up to a student in your classroom being placed in the in-school suspension setting?
6. Did you have any knowledge of the academic expectations of student in the in-school suspension program prior to your student's placement?
7. How did you find out that the incident would be considered a placement in the in-school suspension program and what was the incident?
8. What do you believe is the role of SWPBS or PBIS in the in-school suspension setting?
9. Do you recall attending a meeting with the parents of this student prior to his or her placement in in-school suspension?
10. Were behavioral interventions implemented prior to the student referral?
11. Did you feel that decisions were unanimous or was there disagreement among the participants?
12. Since the students placement in in-school suspension what demonstrated behaviors have changed with the student and your own teaching behaviors.
13. How are academics addressed in the in-school suspension program?

APPENDIX F

Checklist for Interviews

- Introductions
- Review and Sign Letters of Consent
- Overview of the Research Purpose
- Introductory Demographics and Interview Background Information Questions
- Interviews
- Field Notes
- Member-checking

APPENDIX G

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES - OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
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Human Subjects Protection Program

Institutional Review Board

APPROVAL DATE: 09-Aug-2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: LONG III, ROBERT L
 77843-3578

FROM: Office of Research Compliance
 Institutional Review Board

SUBJECT: Initial Review

Protocol Number: 2011-0325

Title: School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Implementation as it Relates to Referral Reduction Among Students of Color in an In-school Suspension Program: Perceptions of Key Stakeholders

Review Category: Exempt from IRB Review

It has been determined that the referenced protocol application meets the criteria for exemption and no further review is required. However, any amendment or modification to the protocol must be reported to the IRB and reviewed before being implemented to ensure the protocol still meets the criteria for exemption.

This determination was based on the following Code of Federal Regulations:
(<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm>)

45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior, unless: (a) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

45 CFR 46.101(b)(4) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Provisions:

Comments:

This electronic document provides notification of the review results by the Institutional Review Board.

VITA

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 Master's in Education Administration & Supervision,
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Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
 Doctor of Education (Public School Administration emphasis)
Executive Leadership Program Doctoral Cohort-I (5/12)

Certifications: *Principal (EC-12) Certification*
 Elementary Educator (Self-Contained) Grades 1-8
 Elementary Reading Emphasis Grades 1-8